

THE Nation.

The Kavanaugh
Hearings KATHA
POLLITT

CATCHING THE BLUE WAVE?

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When Women Get Mad

I really thought we had come farther. Even Barbie says it: Girls can do anything. After all, we now hold the majority of bachelors' degrees, half the seats in medical schools and law schools, run businesses and universities, and sit in Congress. There are even three of us on the Supreme Court. But if you ask why men still run

the world, the answer you'll get back isn't sexual harassment, male violence, or discrimination—the mere mention of which is deeply unfair, to men. The explanation instead is still some variation of the one Lisa Belkin gave in *The New York Times Magazine* in 2003, when she profiled a bunch of Yale alumnae who had given up their big-time jobs to become stay-at-home wives: Because we don't want to. We'd rather be moms and have work-life balance and do yoga and make cookies. Remember how outraged people pretended to be when Hillary Clinton said she would rather practice her profession, which was law, than bake cookies? Those damn cookies. It's not the baking that matters; it's that you feel you have to do it—to be a good woman, to prove that even if you're a brain surgeon, you're still just a mom at heart.

These are the rules of The Patriarchy that the #MeToo movement has exposed. The education, extracurriculars, service projects, credentials—they were never what being a girl was all about. Being a girl is about pleasing men: what they think of you and want from you and how you negotiate that in a world that does not want to hear about the darker side of what that can mean. You can be a world-class athlete, like those Olympic gymnasts, and still be molested by your doctor—and nothing will be done about it for years. You can be fantastically talented and lose your career if you don't play along with Harvey Weinstein or Les Moonves. You can get a unionized factory job with decent pay and still be groped and insulted by both your boss and your fellow workers. You can get straight As and a great job and still feel you have to give your date a blow job because he expects it, and it just seems simpler that way—and maybe safer, too. You wouldn't want him to think you were a tease or a bitch. Because from the moment you were born, you were told in a thousand ways that men liking you was the real measure of your value in the world. And

without even realizing you were doing it, you learned to make yourself likable. To attract men, to disarm them, to manage them, to comfort them.

This, for me, is the meaning of the Senate Judiciary Committee testimony by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. Whatever else a woman is—a PhD, a mother, a victim of a sex crime—the most important thing is that she be likable: attractive, relatable, nonthreatening, nice. And Dr. Blasey Ford was so nice! Pretty, but

not too pretty—educated, upper-middle-class, white, with glasses and a husband and kids. She was just emotional enough—not detached, not “hysterical”—to conform to expectations about what a woman should look like when she tells the truth about being assaulted. She tried so hard to put those old reptiles in the Senate at ease: joking about her craving for caffeine, explaining the science behind her memories, as if they were all in the classroom together

trying to figure out why a woman might remember that the two men assaulting her had laughed, but not remember how she got home that day.

Imagine if Dr. Blasey Ford were poor or fat or a woman of color. Imagine if she'd had a rough divorce followed by numerous boyfriends. Imagine if she had written an article in *Elle* about her sexual fantasies or her addiction to prescription meds. Others have said this, but it's worth repeating: If Dr. Blasey Ford had behaved like Judge Brett Kavanaugh, she would have been dismissed as a liar and a crazy lady. Imagine if she had talked about how much she liked beer some 30 times. Imagine if she had displayed anger, hostility, arrogance, boasted about having gone to Yale, cried self-pitying tears, and thrown questions back in the senators' faces, asking them if they ever had blackouts. Imagine if her yearbook page were full of sexual slang and drinking innuendos obvious to anyone who had ever been a teenager, and she had explained them





113

Number of Supreme Court justices in US history

4

Number of female justices who have served on the Court

178

Years that the Supreme Court was exclusively white and male

100%

Sitting Supreme Court justices who attended either Harvard or Yale

35

Average number of years that new justices are predicted to serve, according to the *Harvard Business Review*

38%

The Supreme Court's approval rating among Democrats as of July—down from 67 percent in 2016

72%

The Supreme Court's approval rating among Republicans as of July—up from 26 percent in 2016

—Chris Gelardi

away with obvious falsehoods. We would have said, “Well, that is exactly the kind of girl who was asking for it then and is lying about it now.”

But because it's a man who did and said those things, it's all copacetic. “He was an immature high-schooler. So were we all,” said Senator Orrin Hatch. He coaches basketball; his little daughters prayed for “the woman.” Boys will be boys. It was a long time ago.

Does #MeToo have the power to change this narrative? Women's anger is the topic du jour. Rebecca Traister's brilliant *Good and Mad* joins Soraya Chemaly's *Rage Becomes Her* and Brittney Cooper's *Eloquent Rage* on a lengthening shelf of books calling for women to own their righteous rage and use it to win justice. After Senator Jeff Flake said he would vote for Kavanaugh, two activists, Ana Maria Archila and Maria Gallagher, confronted him in an elevator and in furious voices told him about their sexual assaults. “Look at me when I'm talking to you!” Gallagher demanded. It was shocking and thrilling, and for the moment it worked. Flake called for a delay on the floor vote, pending a one-week FBI investigation.

“Look at me when I'm talking to you!” Imagine demanding it. Imagine him looking. Finally. KATHA POLLITT

Embassy Row

A mystery continues to poison US-Cuban relations.

A year has passed since the State Department virtually shuttered the US embassy in Havana in response to a rash of ailments reported by embassy personnel, which included hearing loss, headaches, dizziness, insomnia, and cognitive impairments. Multiple US agencies, among them the CIA, the FBI, and an elite military-science advisory team known as the JASON Group, have undertaken major inquiries into the origin of these mysterious maladies—with no discernible conclusions.

Doctors who have examined more than two dozen embassy workers now refer to their brain trauma as “the immaculate concussion.” “They have a few theories,” says one Capitol Hill staffer who has received classified briefings, but “are no closer to knowing how this happened or who was responsible than they were over a year ago.”

The initial theory was that the embassy personnel fell victim to some sort of acoustic aggression—a “sonic attack,” as the mainstream media summed up the phenomenon after victims reported hearing grinding chirps or high-pitched buzzing and squealing sounds, along with a sensation of pressure in their ears. The allegation of an “attack” derives from the identity of the initial group affected: Most were either members of the CIA station in Havana or US diplomats living in residences previously used by intelligence operatives.

But investigators have discounted the theory of a sonic weapon, with acoustic specialists as well as medical experts pointing out that the symptoms could not be caused by noise. In a still-classified report earlier this year, FBI investigators formally dismissed the possibility of a “sonic attack.”

At least one US official was able to tape the sounds as-

sociated with the injuries. The recording underwent a rigorous acoustic analysis by a team of computer scientists and engineers, who provided a second theory: The grinding noises could have been the result of an accidental collision of ultrasound waves from distinct devices, such as those used for eavesdropping and signal jamming. “If ultrasound played a role in harming diplomats in Cuba,” their study states, “then a plausible cause is intermodulation distortion between ultrasonic signals that unintentionally synthesize audible tones. In other words, acoustic interference without malicious intent to cause harm could have led to the audible sensations in Cuba.”

It's unclear whether this theory has been tested to establish if such a collision might result in the victims' symptoms. Instead, a far more sinister theory has emerged: On September 1, *The New York Times* ran a story headlined MICROWAVE WEAPONS ARE PRIME SUSPECT IN ILLS OF U.S. EMBASSY WORKERS. The article provided a history of efforts by both the US and Russian military to build radio-frequency weapons that could “invisibly beam painfully loud booms and even spoken words into people's heads.”

In a variant of this theory, a team of neurotechnology experts told *The Miami Herald* that the victims had possibly been hit by “directed energy weapons” using ultrasound or electromagnetic pulses, “which can cause injury by creating ‘cavitation,’ or air pockets, in fluids near the inner ear.” Other experts were far more skeptical. “Microwave weapons is the closest equivalent in science to fake news,” University of Cincinnati neurologist Alberto Espay told *The Washington Post*. His view is shared by a team of Cuban neuroscientists who traveled to Washington in September to meet with US officials and doctors familiar with the cases. In an interview with NBC, Dr. Mitchell Joseph Valdés-Sosa pointed out that “you'd have to practically vaporize the person before microwaves can damage the brain.”

The Cuban team articulated another theory, one shared by many doctors: that the ailments stemmed from what Valdés-Sosa calls “psychogenic factors” and contagious-anxiety syndrome among the embassy corps. There was no doubt that the US personnel were sickened, he emphasized. But, he added, psychogenic disease—physical ailments that derive from emotional or mental stress—should be seriously considered as a potential cause.

As the diplomatic impasse enters its second year, notes Emily Mendrala, director of the Center for Democracy in the Americas, “the ambiguity of the situation is being used by those who want to undermine policies of engagement between the US and Cuba.” Concerned that the gains of the Obama era are being sabotaged, Cuba has called on Washington to restore normal functions for both the US embassy in Havana and the Cuban embassy in Washington. His country “stands ready to develop respectful and civilized relations,” Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel reiterated in his September speech to the UN General Assembly. But the Trump administration, as Díaz-Canel pessimistically told reporters, is one “with which it is difficult to form an equal relationship.” PETER KORNB�UH

Peter Kornbluh directs the Cuba Documentation Project at the National Security Archive in Washington, DC.

COMMENT

Asking for a Friend



It's Not Easy Being Green

Dear Liza,

With the recent heat waves and other climate-related problems, I have become anxious and despondent about the future. In fact, I am doubtful there will be much of one in 10 or 20 years. My anxiety often keeps me glued to my computer, looking at more and more stories, which tend to get more and more extreme. I have started reading reports of human extinction within the next century, if not sooner.

I sometimes look for articles about the climate crisis that are more positive; but, at best, that gives me a temporary reprieve from the general tenor of the coverage. It makes it almost impossible to do my work. And I can't avoid these stories, as I teach a community-college course on sustainability. I have even contemplated suicide. What should I do?

—Doomed and Gloomed

Dear Doomed,

You are not alone. Andrew Samuels, a Jungian psychoanalyst and a professor at the University of Essex, tells me that therapists are increasingly hearing from patients who are deeply disturbed by climate change and are struggling to cope.

First, get professional help. Call a suicide hotline whenever you think of taking your own life. Samuels points out that you seem to suffer from depression as well as anxiety. Depression is bound up in loss: You may be mourning the planet and humanity as you might mourn the death of a parent. Therapy helps with depression, and it could also help change your addictive relationship to the Internet.

Depression is also related to guilt. It “stems from ideas that one has damaged or destroyed a loved other,” Samuels observes. “That’s why a normal depression follows a bereavement. There is always more that could have been done.” Sometimes we absorb neoliberal guilt over the environment—the feeling that climate change is our fault because we drive a car or order from Amazon. “I think it is crucial not to take full responsibility for what we have done to the planet,” Samuels says. “Sure, some individuals in the corporate and political worlds are particularly careless and hence responsible. But this doesn’t apply to most of us.”

It’s hard to think of a more collective problem than climate change. Yet you seem to experience it as yours alone. Reading your letter, Samuels observes: “This person seems so cut off and alone, an atomized citizen.”

ILLUSTRATED BY JOANNA NEBORSKY

Climate change *is* too much for you—or any one of us—to handle. Alone, we can neither cope with it emotionally nor save humanity from its worst effects. “Part of the problem is that climate change seems so big that it’s hard to conceive that any individual action on our part could work,” the author and environmental activist Bill McKibben points out. “When people ask me, ‘What can I, as an individual, do to save the planet?’ I say, ‘The most important thing you can do is be *less* of an individual.’”

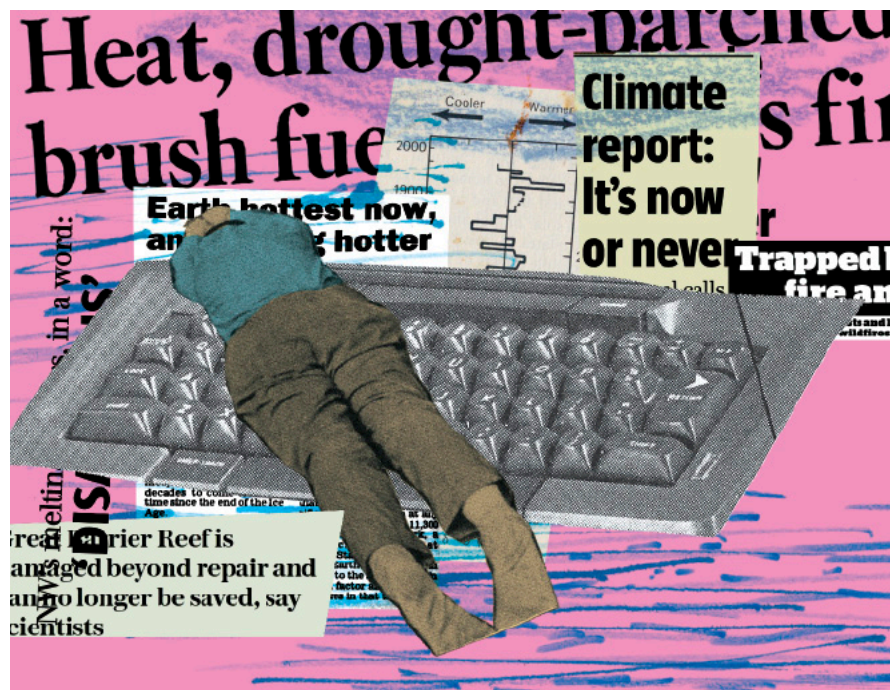
In other words: Become part of the environmental movement. Wherever you live, yes, people are composting (which can certainly be helpful, especially when multiplied millions of times), but even more encouraging, they are organizing to put pressure on corporations to stop polluting and on governments to change policy. This is making a difference. As McKibben notes: “We’ve won a ton of fights. There are lots of pipelines and coal ports that are not getting built. We’re increasingly powerful.”

When you join this movement, you’ll help the planet *and* yourself. When you meet your fellow activists, Samuels urges, admit to some of the feelings you’ve described in your letter. They will empathize; some of them have been there, too. “Just you and your computer is not a productive and creative state of affairs,” Samuels insists. “Activism is good for your mental health.”

I, too, suffer from anxiety over the future of the planet, so your letter has been a hard one for me to live with and to answer. One of the reasons we feel anxious, though, is that we don’t know what is going to happen. If we knew that we were facing extinction within our century, we would give up and grieve—or party in a bacchanalian fashion. But we don’t

(continued on page 8)

Questions?
Ask Liza at
TheNation
.com/article/
asking-for-a-
friend.



NATION NEWS

Covering Poverty

Greg Kaufmann rejoins *The Nation* as a contributing writer focused on poverty.

From 2011 to '13, Kaufmann wrote the regular *Nation* series "This Week in Poverty," part of our continuing coverage of an issue that editor and publisher Katrina vanden Heuvel calls "the shame of our nation." Kaufmann will revive this beat with two columns a month focused on those waging today's War on Poverty, paying particular attention to the emerging Poor People's Campaign, now at work in more than 40 states.

Kaufmann will also provide updates on legislative efforts at the national, state, and local levels; highlight the work of community activists; bust myths in the media's coverage of poverty policy; and identify ways of changing the narrative. He will demand accountability from the Republicans and Democrats who stand in the way of effective policy, and spotlight under-the-radar opportunities for action—lifting up ideas from scholars, policy professionals, and others that could make a real difference in the lives of people in poverty.

Finally, Kaufmann will call attention to everyday poverty in our nation's capital, where he is based, and where the reporting and public awareness are woefully inadequate.

To read Kaufmann's first installment, "How a Guaranteed Income Could Relieve the 'Pressure Cooker' of Poverty," go to TheNation.com.



Eric Alterman



The Lying Game

Democratic senators should have called out Kavanaugh's blatant perjury.

The Senate Judiciary Committee's Kavanaugh–Blasey Ford hearing perfectly illustrated the conundrum that we find ourselves in today. We teach our children to live by the core values of honesty, civility, respect, and fair play, and we do our best to live up to them ourselves. Yet it is our own adherence to these values that leaves us vulnerable to the campaign by Donald Trump and the Republican Party to destroy what remains of our democracy.

It is no secret that—amid his whining, bragadocio, and staggering displays of self-pity—would-be Supreme Court justice Brett Kavanaugh repeatedly perjured himself. Fact-checking articles in the days after the hearing identified well more than a dozen lies: lies about his high-school years, his college years, his drinking habits, his calendar, his yearbook, his judicial beliefs, the laws of Maryland, the testimony of his friends, and the meaning of words. It's a wonder he gave his real name.

And yet none of the Democrats on the committee had the nerve to call Kavanaugh a liar to his face; none were even willing to call his lies "lies." They raised questions; they implied that they did not find him credible; they tried to catch him in contradictions; they rolled their eyes at his protestations of innocence, in both sexual and criminal matters; and they asked him, over and over, to pretty-please ask the president for an FBI investigation. But Kavanaugh simply boasted and yelled, as if auditioning for a frat-boy spin-off of *Fox & Friends*.

In the upper reaches of American politics, to call a powerful person a "liar" has long been beyond the pale of acceptable behavior. The exploitation of this now-obsolete nicety is what lies behind not only Trump's success, but that of Mitch McConnell, Paul Ryan, Ted Cruz, Lindsey Graham, and just about every other successful contemporary "conservative" pundit and politician in America.

But Democrats and most members of the mainstream media are still playing by the old rules. Senators on the Judiciary Committee had to know they were being lied to, since the lies were continuously highlighted on Twitter. Just cataloging them all would take up more than double the space of this column. *The New York Times*' fact-check of Kavanaugh's testimony ran over 2,700 words;

The Washington Post's, more than 2,300. But even here, where his deliberate dishonesty was the actual topic of the articles, we got headlines that described Kavanaugh as having given testimony that "Misleads or Veers Off Point" (the *Times*) or was "misleading or wrong" (the *Post*).

The fact-checking articles were largely second-day pieces, but just like the brainless chyrons that appeared on the bottom of the cable-news shows, the initial straight-news reporting presented the hearing as a "he said/she said" affair, despite being written and edited by people who had to have known that "she" told a credible story, while "he" had done the opposite.

The front-page coverage in the *Times* was literally headlined "She Said. Then He Said. Now What Will Senators Say?" Peter Baker's account failed to mention that Kavanaugh's testimony had been discredited (though the other article that ran across the front page—"High-Stakes Duel of Tears and Fury Unfolds in

Senate"—quoted a senator inquiring about a lie but took no position on the obvious falsehood). The stories that ran inside the paper similarly ignored Kavanaugh's fibs, such as "Graham Erupts at 'the Most Unethical Sham,' Capping a Turn Toward Trump," by Michael Shear, or "A Day When Emotions Ran High, Both Inside and Outside of the Capitol," by Matt Flegenheimer.

The *Post*'s coverage mirrored this tendency. Its front-page story was a "he said/she said" compendium by three reporters—Michael Kranish, Emma Brown, and Tom Hamburger—titled "A different Kavanaugh comes out swinging, hard." Such stories were the rule across the mainstream media. Here's CNN.com: "Ford '100%' certain of assault claim; Kavanaugh says 'I am innocent.'" *The Atlantic*'s report by Russell Berman was headlined "The Senate Judiciary Committee Believes Brett Kavanaugh" and took no notice of the judge's lies. Even the *Columbia Journalism Review*



In the upper reaches of American politics, to call a powerful person a "liar" has long been beyond the pale of acceptable behavior.

India

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It is clear that reporters on the news side aren't going to do the Democrats' job for them, and so Democrats had better do it themselves.

chose to go in this direction with Pete Vernon's article, "Ford, Kavanaugh, and America divided," which began with the words "It was a he-said-she-said exchange...." In *The Wall Street Journal*, Kristina Peterson, Natalie Andrews, and Andrew Duehren's piece, "Hearing Rivets the Nation and Its Legislators," not only failed to point out Kavanaugh's flimflammy, but also mostly limited its quotes to pro-Kavanaugh partisans, going so far as to give unnamed "officials" anonymity to sell the Republican version of events.

All of these publications—excluding Rupert Murdoch's *Wall Street Journal*—were filled on the same day with probing commentary demonstrating how dishonest Kavanaugh had been. (Special kudos to the *Boston Globe* editorial that stated flatly: "Brett Kavanaugh's a liar.") It is this kind of commentary that gets the media accused of "liberal bias." But it is also clear that reporters on the news

side aren't going to do the Democrats' job for them, and so Democrats had better do it themselves. If just one senator had listed Kavanaugh's lies and then challenged him to prove that he was telling the truth, our benighted politics would be in a different place today. If that had happened, journalists covering the hearing would have had an opening to adjudicate the argument by examining the evidence without falling prey to the reflexive charge of "liberal bias."

When spectacle is all, then the spectacle wins and substance disappears. Trump and the Republicans know that, which is why they control all three branches of government in a country where most people find their policies and politics anathema. Democrats refuse to acknowledge this, which is why they keep losing. And the members of the mainstream media certainly know this as well, but continue to pretend they don't—which is why the charade lives on.

(continued from page 5)

know. For people prone to anxiety like ourselves, this uncertainty is hard to tolerate. But within that uncertainty lies a measured but radiant hope.

"Some things are going much better than we thought they would," McKibben says. To give just one example, the price of solar panels has fallen by 90 percent. "Ev-

erything points to: If we want to solve this problem, we can."

This kind of optimism is not denial. "We're not going to be able to stop global warming," McKib-

ben acknowledges. "But we may be able to save the civilization that our forebears have built."

To do that, we need to reject despair and start fighting together—for future humans and for ourselves.

joying their honeymoon in Bali (or in this case, Budapest). You could send a polite card with your regrets, wishing Mr. and Mrs. Storm Trooper many happy returns. But it's worthwhile to raise the social cost of membership in the far right. After many participants in the Charlottesville rallies had their personal information revealed online, white-pride leader Richard Spencer saw a dip in attendance at his events. People were afraid of losing their jobs or alienating their friends and family. That's good. If you don't mind severing the relationship, decline to receive the invitation and tell him why. But if you don't wish to confront him, that's understandable. Perhaps you avoid antagonizing men with hateful ideologies (fair), or want to protect the relationship out of a shared history or a fondness for his unlucky parents (both also fair). If that's the case, but you'd still like to withhold your approval, I recommend ignoring his request for your address. Just pretend you forgot to answer his messages.

COMIX NATION

PETER KUPER



Dear Liza,

I have a cousin that I haven't seen in many years and saw only from time to time as a youth. My only knowledge of his life and politics is via social media; he's well-educated but deeply reactionary and motivated by far-right ideology. He's getting married and wants to send me an invitation to the wedding. Am I obliged to give him my address? I will not attend (too far away), but am I also obliged to send a wedding gift? Can I ignore the request?

—Commie Cousin

Dear Commie,

Don't send a gift. We all sometimes forget to send wedding presents—even to people who aren't Nazis. It's petty for new-lweds to notice such things; they should be en-

THE WARFARE STATE

Ignoring Uncle Sam



President Trump wants a bigger military. Both on the campaign trail and in office, he has vowed to give the US armed forces—already the most powerful in the world—“everything” they need to “rebuild.” And on August 13, Trump signed a bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allocating \$717 billion to the military, bringing defense spending to a level higher than at any time save for the height of the Iraq War.

But it seems that young people are reluctant to heed the president’s vision. About a month after Trump signed the NDAA, the Army announced that it was more than 6,000 candidates short of its recruiting goal of 76,500 for fiscal year 2018.

“A strong economy and a lower propensity among the population of 17- to 24-year-olds to enlist are challenges we face,” an Army spokesperson admitted to ABC News. Data show that when unemployment is on the decline—that is, when young people are less economically desperate—military enlistment also tends to slow. Despite stagnant wages for most Americans, unemployment is at its lowest point in years.

So how does the Army plan to bump up its recruiting numbers? Senior Army leaders told ABC that “there will be a greater focus on social media and more recruiter contacts with video-game competitions.”

—Chris Gelardi

Patricia J. Williams



A Tale of Two Hearings

The Kavanaugh affair shows us who may speak—and who must remain silent.

Listening to news reports over the last weeks, I have felt sadness and a deep sense of the absurd. As 1,600 migrant children were quietly transferred under cover of darkness to tent cities in the desert, I watched reports in which Donald Trump defended Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh by comparing him to George Washington—who, the president asserted, might also “have a couple of things in his past.” The next clip on the newsfeed was titled “Seal slaps man with octopus.” Somehow, the juxtaposition seemed apt.

The Kavanaugh hearing has become a spectacle blocking all other light. The nation stopped and fell silent during Christine Blasey Ford’s testimony because it raised existential questions about the norms of teenage behavior, about class difference, and about the disproportionate power over women’s bodies wielded in clubby circles of privilege. Likewise, Kavanaugh’s own testimony provoked questions about men’s and women’s comparative expectations for self-composure; what it signals when men cry; and, most of all, what it means when a judicial candidate expresses explicitly partisan rage against “revenge”-seeking Democrats, “outside left-wing opposition groups,” and those acting “on behalf of the Clintons.”

After each day of the hearings, I rode the bus home. For a hundred blocks, I overheard New Yorkers discussing the spectacle: teenage girls comparing their so-unhappy experiences at parties with drunken classmates; a conversation in Spanish about what Kavanaugh might rule if he were considering the indefinite detention of children; a pair of black mothers marveling at a country-club lifestyle in which “boys would be boys” without fear of police officers crashing the good times; three law students snorting at what they called Kavanaugh’s “originalist” meanings of “boof” and “devil’s triangle”; an elderly couple recalling that Strom Thurmond had waxed “quite righteously” during Clarence Thomas’s confirmation hearings in 1991, but that only after Thurmond’s death did it come out that he had fathered a child by his family’s 16-year-old black maid. “Wouldn’t that be statutory rape in today’s world?” asked the wife. “Not to mention child labor,” fretted the husband.

Over the noise, I have been struck by the

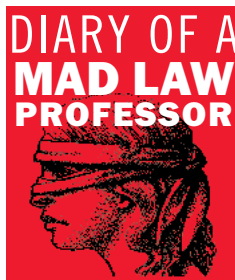
significant silences about procedural structure. Much has been made of the fact that this is a “job interview, not a trial,” where the formal or usual courtroom rules would apply. Fair enough—but Senate committees still have power as deliberative bodies charged with ensuring that judicial codes of ethics will be followed.

Yet when Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana was asked what criteria he would use to evaluate Blasey Ford’s credibility, he responded, “That’s like asking me to explain the Holy Spirit.” It was a response that underscored the utter lack of a standard of proof by which the committee seemed to be proceeding.

The Republican majority on the committee has displayed a peculiar resistance to a clear process. In their refusal to allow more facts and voices to be introduced, they effectively imposed a binary structure of “he said/she said.” Needless to say, it’s harder to prove any case if you cut out and thereby silence the potential corroboration of other witnesses.

Moreover, in hiring Maricopa County prosecutor Rachel Mitchell to question Blasey Ford, the GOP committee members literally used a female body to shield themselves from “looking” insensitive and overbearingly male. In relentlessly pitching Mitchell as a “sex-crimes prosecutor,” they misleadingly hinted at the sort of process due in a full-fledged criminal trial. They did not mention that this would have required a more extensive investigation, including questioning material witnesses like Kavanaugh’s friend Mark Judge.

At the final hearing, Kavanaugh complained—loudly—that “advice and consent” is being turned into “search and destroy.” It’s a catchy line, delivered with the zingy precision of a spitball in a high-school classroom. But “advice and consent” is a process: the constitutional mechanism designed precisely to inquire into and screen out



In its refusal to allow more facts and voices, the Republican majority has displayed a peculiar resistance to a clear process.

judicial distemper. That senatorial duty doesn't constitute a "calculated and orchestrated political hit" job, as Kavanaugh fumed.

As Senators Chuck Grassley and Lindsey Graham shouted at Democrats for supposedly rendering the proceedings a "sham," I was struck by how their high-volume unruliness contrasted with the hearings for Jeff Sessions's nomination as attorney general in 2017. Back then, Senator Elizabeth Warren attempted to read a 1986 letter into the record from the late Coretta Scott King, who had asserted that Sessions lacked "temperament, fairness and judgment." Senator Steve Daines of Montana cut her off. "I'm simply reading what [King] wrote about what the nomination of Sessions to be a federal-court judge meant, and what it would mean in history, for her," Warren said. "You stated that a sitting senator is a disgrace to the De-

partment of Justice," he replied.

Daines and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell formally censured Warren under Rule XIX: "No Senator in debate shall, directly or indirectly, by any form of words impute to another Senator...any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator."

There is such irony in this double standard about who may speak, who can shout, who has license to call out bias or an aggressive disposition in whom. Blasey Ford alleged that Kavanaugh's laughter was the most searing element of their encounter. At least as troubling is her allegation that she endured that mirth with his hand clamped over her mouth. That violent image of silencing will live on as a chilling metaphor for all the other interests at stake in decisions over who will be granted hearing—and who left to suffer without. ■

The GOP committee members literally used a female body to shield themselves from looking insensitive and overbearingly male.

SNAPSHOT / RUPAK DE CHOWDHURI

Life's a Gas

For the upcoming Hindu festival of Durga Puja, workers in Kolkata construct a *pandal*, or temporary platform, featuring a sculpture of a man wearing a gas mask. The *pandal* will highlight the importance of clean air to devotees of the goddess Durga.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

KAVANAUGH'S TESTIMONY

He whined, he bullied and he wept—
Behaving like an unhinged lout.

The White House saw a grand display—
Judicial temperament throughout.



BETO O'ROURKE'S

Big Texas Gamble

He's mobilizing millions of disenchanted voters in his race to bring the Lone Star State back into the Democratic fold.

JOHN NICHOLS

BETO O'ROURKE IS ON FIRE. IN FRONT OF THE ALTAR OF THE HISTORIC GOOD STREET BAPTIST Church on a steamy late-summer night in Dallas, the wiry young congressman is pacing back and forth across the red carpet. He is not speaking. He is preaching, with a fury at injustice that echoes across the centuries—from the West Texas populist rabble-rousers of the 1890s to the San Antonio labor organizers of the 1930s to the border-town civil-rights campaigners of the 1950s and the intersectional activists of right now. O'Rourke's words do not come in a steady stream of predictable political parlance. They explode in bursts of righteous anger and indignation over the killing of another young African-American man by another white police officer.

"How can it be, in this day and age, in this very year, in this community, that a young man, African-American, in his own apartment, is shot and killed by a police officer?" he demands. People in the crowd of

2,000, which has packed the church days after 26-year-old Botham Jean was killed by a police officer in his Dallas apartment, begin to rise. They are clapping—slowly at first, and then faster. There are shouts of "Yes!" and "Right!" More people rise as O'Rourke continues. "And when we all want justice and the facts and the information to make an informed decision, what's released to the public? That he had a small amount of marijuana in his kitchen." The applause is now thunderous. Everyone is on their feet, roaring their approval as O'Rourke thunders: "How can that be just in this country? How can we continue to lose the lives of unarmed black men in the United States of America at the hands of white police officers? That is not justice. That is not us. That can and *must* change."

That's the Democratic nominee for the US Senate in the Lone Star State talking. Texas: the state that has not backed a Democrat for president since Jimmy Carter in 1976. Texas: the state that has not elected a Democrat to statewide office since 1994. Texas: the state that in 2012, by a 57–41 margin, elected Senator Ted Cruz, the paleoconservative firebrand who would briefly serve as the standard-bearer of the "Never Trump" Republicans, who entertained the fantasy that there was a space to the right of Donald Trump. Cruz would have preferred to be president, but he'll settle for another term in the Senate.

"Who would have thought that the Senate race in Texas would be competitive?"

—Larry Sabato,
election analyst

To that end, he has made his peace with Trump—a compromise that has earned him ridicule, like the mobile billboard that's been showing up all over Texas with a Trump tweet from 2016 reading: "Why would the people of Texas support Ted Cruz when he has accomplished nothing for them? He is another all talk, no action pol!"

Cruz is an absurd figure, a political careerist so craven that he is now carrying water for the guy who tried to link Cruz's own father to the John F. Kennedy assassination. But, historically, absurdity has not been a disqualifying trait in Texas. So the best bet going into the 2018 election was that Cruz would do what Republicans have done in every Senate race for a quarter-century: Slay the latest Democratic sacrificial lamb. "Since 1988, when Lloyd Bentsen won re-election to the Senate, Democrats have spent close to a billion dollars on consultants and pollsters and experts and campaign wizards and have performed terribly," O'Rourke told *The Texas Tribune* as he launched a rule-breaking challenge to the incumbent. For a campaign that would upend Texas politics, O'Rourke gave up a safe seat in the House, renounced PAC money, and headed off in a Dodge Grand Caravan to campaign in every one of the state's 254 counties. "There's no private jet, no consultant, no pollster saying, 'This is the message you have to say





to this group or that,” O’Rourke announced. “We allow people to drive the conversation and this campaign.”

Adapting the DIY ethic of the punk scene that he’d been part of as a Texas teen, the 45-year-old candidate explained as he got his campaign rolling in 2017: “When you’re putting out your own records and booking your own tours and writing your own songs, you get to control what you say. The campaign is the same thing.” As O’Rourke embarked earlier this year on a 34-day road trip across the state—serving as driver and dashboard DJ—*The Houston Chronicle* declared: “It’s a new playbook, born of Democratic futility in Texas.” That new playbook has turned out to be a fine field guide for 2018.

“Who would have thought that the Senate race in Texas would be competitive?” marveled veteran election analyst Larry Sabato. On September 21, the day of the first debate between the candidates, in which O’Rourke more than held his own against Cruz, the *Cook Political Report* moved the Texas race from “Leans Republican” to “Toss-Up.” The change came as polls showed O’Rourke pulling even with the GOP incumbent. Most surveys still put Cruz slightly ahead. But the *Cook* analysis was based on O’Rourke’s momentum—and money. Though Cruz is one of the most prodigious fund-raisers in contemporary politics, O’Rourke’s grassroots backers had, by August, provided the challenger with almost as much campaign cash as the incumbent: \$23.3 million raised over 15 months by O’Rourke, versus \$25.9 million raised since late 2012 by Cruz. Announcing that his campaign is “what democracy looks like,” the Democrat reported that he had attracted 215,714 individual donations, averaging \$33, in the second quarter of 2018. That’s necessary money in Texas, a state with 20 media markets, and where Democrats have struggled for years to hold their own in the TV “ad wars” that conclude fall contests. As the *Cook Political Report* now suggests, there’s a path to victory for O’Rourke that’s “difficult though not utterly impossible.”

That has Democrats across the country excited. The chaos and crisis of the Trump administration—with the

“You’ve got a Democratic constituency that is fed up not just with Trump but with the centrist, mealy-mouthed Democratic establishment.”

—Jim Hightower

Lone Star standoff: O’Rourke (right) and Cruz before their first debate, at Southern Methodist University in Dallas on September 21.

president’s approval ratings tanking and generic congressional-vote surveys showing Democrats up by as much as eight points—established the prospect of flipping the House early in the 2018 campaign season. But the idea of taking the Senate from Mitch McConnell’s Republicans was initially dismissed, in a year when 24 Democratic seats are up for grabs, versus just nine for Republicans. Putting Texas in play, however, shifts the calculus. If O’Rourke wins, and if Democrats Kyrsten Sinema and Jacky Rosen seize Republican-held seats in Arizona and Nevada, then the party could afford to lose a vulnerable incumbent (such as Indiana’s Joe Donnelly or North Dakota’s Heidi Heitkamp) and still start 2019 with a 51–49 majority. So when a September 19 Reuters/Ipsos/UVA Center for Politics Poll put O’Rourke ahead of Cruz by two points, social-media alerts went off nationwide.

THERE’S ANOTHER REASON WHY DEMOCRATS should be paying attention to O’Rourke’s rise, however. His campaign represents a real-time experiment for a party that is still struggling to define itself in the Trump era. This experiment rejects the tepid counsel of the Democratic strategists who have, since the arrival of the so-called New Democrats of the 1980s, steered the party’s red-state contenders toward bland “we’re not quite as bad as the other guys” messaging. Instead of making empty appeals to a few swing voters, O’Rourke seeks to mobilize millions of people who are disengaged, disenchanted, and discriminated against. While the congressman is unfailingly polite, even courtly at times, he is practicing a style of no-holds-barred politics that marks him as a different kind of candidate—not merely from the contenders that Texas Democrats have sacrificed in Senate race after Senate race, but from the party’s nominees for offices in most red (and many blue) states.

O’Rourke is betting on the long-anticipated promise of Texas: that a demographic wave will eventually evolve Lone Star politics beyond the cruel conservatism of the past—which once made its home in the segregationist sectors of the old Democratic Party, but that is now firmly embedded in the GOP of Cruz and Trump. There is mounting evidence that what the author Steve Phillips and the O’Rourke-supporting activist group Democracy for America refer to as a “New American Majority” coalition of Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, women, and the young is transforming Texas politics. In 2016, Hillary Clinton did as well there as she did in the traditional battleground state of Ohio—and her Texas percentage was better than in the battleground state of Iowa.

But while the trend lines are improving, the Democrats are still waiting for a win. So O’Rourke has mounted what he admits is a “Hail Mary” campaign. He has jettisoned the caution not just of the consultants he decries but of his own early years in politics, when he was a developer-friendly member of the El Paso City Council, and then as a low-profile congressman who in 2016 praised Bernie Sanders but gave his superdelegate vote to Clinton.

O’Rourke is not the only prominent Democrat who has recognized that the party needs to go bigger and bolder in 2018. But it is beyond debate that he has gone bigger





and bolder than anyone expected from a Senate candidate in Texas. While O'Rourke has a history of taking strong positions against the War on Drugs and in favor of unprecedented action on climate change, he's running this year as a full-spectrum progressive: someone who makes abortion rights and gun control central to his campaign; embraces unions and civil-rights groups; seeks to "end the militarization of our immigration-enforcement system"; talks about the need for "stronger antitrust regulations that break up monopolies"; and says "a single-payer Medicare for All program is the best way to ensure all Americans get the health care they need." Cruz rips O'Rourke for his "extreme left-wing positions—positions further to the left of Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders or Nancy Pelosi." But Texas populist Jim Hightower, who was twice elected as the state's agriculture commissioner back in the last blue-wave era of the 1980s, sees it less as a matter of left versus right and more as a case of recognizing the deep frustration that voters have with both major parties. "You've got a Democratic constituency that is fed up not just with Trump but with the centrist, mealy-mouthed, know-nothing Democratic establishment. And they're looking for some real change," says Hightower, who argues that "Beto is representing that."

There is nothing mealy-mouthed about O'Rourke's campaign. Asked in July about President Trump's disastrous trip to Europe, which culminated in an astonishing display of obsequiousness toward Russian President Vladimir Putin, O'Rourke's response was, indeed, bolder than that of Pelosi, Sanders, or Warren. "Standing onstage in another country with the leader of another country who wants to and has sought to undermine this country, and to side with him over the United States—if I were asked to vote on this, I would vote to impeach the president," the Texan said. A month later, at a town hall in Houston, O'Rourke was asked whether he thought it was wrong for NFL players to "take a knee" during the national anthem. "My short answer is no, I don't think it's disrespectful," he replied, before offering the overwhelmingly white audience his "longer answer."

He asked them to reflect on "peaceful, nonviolent protests, including taking a knee at a football game to point out that black men, unarmed; black teenagers, unarmed; and black children, unarmed, are being killed at a frightening level right now, including by members of law enforcement, without accountability and without justice. And this problem—as grave as it is—is not gonna fix itself. And they're frustrated, frankly, with people like me and those in positions of public trust and power who have been unable to resolve this or bring justice for what has been done and to stop it from continuing to happen in this country.... And so, nonviolently, peacefully, while the eyes of this country are watching these games, they take a knee to bring our attention and our focus to this problem to ensure that we fix it.... I can think of nothing more American than to peacefully stand up, or take a knee, for your rights anytime, anywhere, anyplace."

NBA star LeBron James saluted O'Rourke for his "candid thoughtful words!" But Cruz declared that his rival's "perception of what is 'American' is utterly flawed."



Veterans for Beto: O'Rourke with supporters at a "Beers for Beto" gathering in Houston, January 5.

"I can think of nothing more American than to peacefully stand up, or take a knee, for your rights anytime, anywhere, anyplace."

—Beto O'Rourke

The Cruz campaign tore into O'Rourke with a video that asked: "Nothing more American? Liberal Hollywood was thrilled. But do Texans agree?" The answer came from places like Plano in North Texas's Collin County, which backed Trump 56–39 in 2016 and where the local legislators and congressional representatives are GOP stalwarts. When O'Rourke arrived in Plano in mid-September, after saying he would vote to impeach Trump, after saying there was nothing more American than taking a knee, and just hours after he decried the killing of Botham Jean, thousands of people showed up. They chanted "Beto! Beto! Beto!" so loudly that it was hard to hear the candidate declare, "We are defying the conventional wisdom."

O'Rourke kept defying the conventional wisdom a few days later when he debated Cruz. The incumbent, a college debate champion who has a reputation for verbally shredding his opponents, claimed that O'Rourke was out of touch with "Texas values." The Democrat replied, "Only one of us has been to each county in Texas and would have an idea of what Texas values and interests are." Then, recalling his rival's failed 2016 presidential bid, O'Rourke noted that Cruz had "visited every single one of the 99 counties of Iowa." The senator listened with the forced smile of a man in pain. He roared on about how O'Rourke's views are "not consistent with what the people of Texas want." The challenger calmly pointed to the incumbent and said: "I want to make sure that we're not giving away to corporations or special interests. That's what Senator Cruz would do, thanks to the contributions he's received from those political-action committees. He's working for the clampdown and the corporations and the special interests. He's not working for the people of Texas."

"Clampdown" is the righteous anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-corporate song penned by the pioneering punk group the Clash in the late 1970s, when Margaret Thatcher was turning Britain against itself. The reference was a savage burn, knowingly applied by a punk rocker turned candidate to one of the most culturally unaware members of the US Senate. Ted Cruz didn't know what hit him. ■



ON JUNE 26, FEW PEOPLE OUTSIDE NEW YORK'S 14th Congressional District knew who Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was. But by the next day, when news spread that she'd toppled her opponent, 10-term Representative Joseph Crowley, in the Democratic congressional primary, she was a national celebrity. She appeared on CNN, *Meet the Press*, PBS's *Firing Line*, *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, *The Daily Show*, and MSNBC as the fresh face of a revived American left. Her lip color of choice—Stila Stay All Day Liquid Lipstick in Beso—sold out in several stores.

When she appeared a few weeks later at a rally near

Wall Street's *Charging Bull* statue in Lower Manhattan to endorse Zephyr Teachout, who was seeking the Democratic nomination to become New York's next attorney general, a large crowd cheered—many of them clearly there to catch a glimpse of Ocasio-Cortez, not the candidate she was supporting.

Photographers—paparazzi?—shouted out, “Alex! Alexandria! Over here!” An “I Love NYC” tour bus pulled up alongside the statue. “Hey, I know her! That’s her!” yelled a guy in a baseball cap, standing and pointing from the bus’s top deck. Dozens of tourists began frantically snapping photos of the young woman whose face, if not name, they recognized—or assumed they did. Ocasio-Cortez



What's Next FOR AOC?

She won the primary. Now she's building a movement.

RAINA LIPSITZ



waved, flashed a toothy grin, and shouted, “Vote for Zephyr Teachout in September!” Then she was hustled away by a staffer, to a chorus of disappointed groans. “Sorry, guys,” she said, sounding genuinely regretful. “I gotta go!”

Since the hectic days following her primary win, Ocasio-Cortez has only gained momentum. In November, she will face her Republican opponent, Anthony Pappas, in the general election. She’s expected to win, which would make her the youngest woman in Congress come January. Still, in spite of her star power, her staff and volunteers stress that Ocasio-Cortez is part of a movement in which no individual deserves sole credit. They emphasize building community and sharing power as the keys to an effective progressive movement.

Crucially, these supporters insist that the movement’s work does not end with an election. Alexandra Rojas, 23, a founding member of Brand New Congress and the executive director of Justice Democrats—two groups that supported Ocasio-Cortez—told me that the candidates her organization endorses know that it’s “not just about one election, but building a movement and helping one another.” Jeff Latzer, a campaign volunteer, praised Ocasio-Cortez’s skill in reaching out to the grassroots: “Alexandria is the perfect combination of an extremely grounded person who did not set out to get involved in politics, but just has this amazing ability to communicate issues for people on a level they can relate to.” Or as Naureen Akhter, Ocasio-Cortez’s 31-year-old director of organizing, put it: “It might sound corny, but she really does feel like one of us.”

Barring any last-minute surprises, Ocasio-Cortez won’t be the plucky wunderkind of the insurgent left much longer; she’ll be a sitting member of Congress instead. Given the pressures she’ll face from Republicans and establishment Democrats, it’s worth asking how she will square her democratic-socialist ideals with the politics of Washington. But it will also be hard for the grassroots groups that helped drive her candidacy to keep from being eclipsed in the political spotlight when the candidate herself is so extraordinary. That’s why members of the movement that got her elected must figure out how to support Ocasio-Cortez in achieving their progressive policy aims—while also holding her accountable for doing so.

“People who were ‘just’ organizers two months ago are now very formidable community figures.”

—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

New wave: Ocasio-Cortez campaigns for Zephyr Teachout in Manhattan last July.



getic about it—and arrived looking chic but tired, her hair pulled back tightly beneath wire-framed glasses.

Ocasio-Cortez’s demeanor was as warm as when I’d met her before the primary, if slightly more guarded. Over the past three months, she’d campaigned hard for several candidates, with mixed results. She stumped for Abdul El-Sayed (running for the governor’s seat in Michigan), Fayrouz Saad and Rashida Tlaib (for congressional seats in Michigan), Cori Bush (in Missouri), Kaniela Ing (in Hawaii), and Brent Welder and James Thompson (in Kansas). Tlaib and Thompson won, and Tlaib is now poised to become the first Muslim woman in Congress. Together, she and Ocasio-Cortez will also represent the Democratic Socialists of America on the federal level.

But before she heads south, Ocasio-Cortez says she wants to “get back to the basics” of working with the people in her district, which spans parts of two New York City boroughs: Queens and the Bronx. Before June, she points out, the only power structure in both places was “the machine.” That’s why she and her team are focused on building relationships with progressive community groups and leaders in her district. “People who were ‘just’ organizers two months ago are now very formidable community figures,” she explains, and “we’ve been keeping our ear to the ground.” Jake DeGroot, the 32-year-old deputy operations director for the campaign, told me they are corralling “people already doing organizing work: tenants, bodegas, food-cart workers. We want to [show] them this campaign is here to hear from them and promote their interests.”

Two key organizations to emerge from the 2016 Democratic presidential primaries, Brand New Congress and Justice Democrats, have been crucial to Ocasio-Cortez’s success. Brand New Congress, which recruited her to run, requires its candidates to reject money from corporate PACs and lobbyists. Justice Democrats advocates for a federal jobs guarantee, single-payer health care, and the abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). The groups share many of the same principles but employ different strategies.

While much of their energy comes from Bernie Sanders supporters with previous campaign experience, they are also attracting young people just getting involved in politics as well as people who supported Hill-

ary Clinton but believe the Democratic Party should move more to the left. Ocasio-Cortez tells me she plans to join the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Medicare for All Caucus, and “quite a few others.” In addition to her well-known talking points—single-payer health care, climate justice, criminal-justice reform, immigrant justice, rejecting corporate money, and taking on the fossil-fuel lobby—“we’re starting to see a little more of a galvanized anti-war movement [in the House], and folks like Barbara Lee have really led the way on that.”

She also stresses the importance

OCASIO-CORTEZ’S LIFE HAS changed dramatically since the primary. Forget free time, or even the luxury of scheduling interviews well in advance: It took three canceled meetings over the course of the summer before Jeff Latzer, my contact on her campaign, was able to slot me in. On the morning of our interview, he asked me to change the location and push back the time by an hour, because “she tries really hard not to be late.” And when we finally convened, Ocasio-Cortez was, in fact, 15 minutes late—though profusely apolo-



of building trust and the need for “radical transparency” from elected officials, particularly when addressing how she’ll make the necessary compromises in Washington without alienating her left-wing base. It’s crucial to communicate with constituents and, when necessary, to explain that “this is what we believe, this is what we are actively fighting for,” she says. “But also, these are the possibilities at the moment—whether it’s a Republican majority [or] a majority of more conservative Democrats on a given issue.”

Ocasio-Cortez also seems visibly frustrated by the recent criticisms coming from her own side. Responding to the angry reactions on Twitter over a few perceived missteps, she denounces “cynicism” as “the greatest enemy of the progressive left.” First came an interview after her election, in which she gave an answer on Israel/Palestine that was widely criticized—by the right for using the word “occupation” in relation to Palestine, and by the left for betraying her supposed ignorance of “geopolitics.”

If you “take any individual person, and if I put [them] on the spot on giving me a flawless answer on the political status of Puerto Rico, for example—people are going to falter,” she says, adding that the idea that left-wing candidates can only run “if you’re flawless and ready to go on every single potential question you could ever be asked in any policy zone—it’s too high of a standard. We’re setting ourselves up to fail.”

And on lefty Twitter’s ire over her tweet about John McCain (“John McCain’s legacy represents an unparalleled example of human decency and American service”), she says, “We need to look at: Have the commitments changed? And I don’t think my commitments on any of these issues have changed at all. It’s one tweet, after a multi-decade public servant passed away—does that mean I’m no longer an anti-war candidate? That’s a ridiculous assumption to make. That’s a huge leap in logic.”

Ocasio-Cortez articulates how important it is to retain “the ability to have accountability” without “undermining our movement.” She is careful to avoid rejecting criticism outright. “I welcome the criticism,” she says. “But we need to look outward, too. We need to bring people in.” Discussing Julia Salazar, the candidate who recently won her New York State Senate primary by a wide margin despite a last-minute blitz of negative press, she says: “Old modes are not working the way that they used to. Politics is local. And if you really want to be effective, it’s super-important

“The great evolution that we’ve had in the last two years is that we have really dismantled this idea of race or class.”

—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Media darling: Ocasio-Cortez on MSNBC shortly after her defeat of Joe Crowley in her district’s primary.

that you build grassroots, on-the-ground operations. That is how we win. When you have a strong enough on-the-ground operation, you can really fend off a lot.”

Then she adds, slowly and distinctly: “Our work, on the progressive left, just started.” She wants to remind people that the democratic-socialist resurgence is new—and fragile. “We just got people in positions to get things done. But if we abdicate our responsibility now, we will have given up the biggest opportunity we’ve gotten in decades.”

After all, people on the right “support their candidates no matter what; they do not care.” She believes the left “can be a better version of that,” while still holding its representatives accountable. “Where the wheels really start to come off,” she argues, “is when people say, ‘Oh, this one word was used in this one place—it’s useless, she’s already compromised.’”

Another allegedly compromising moment for Ocasio-Cortez was her attendance at a soirée at the home of Audrey Gelman, a recovering Clinton supporter and founder of The Wing, an exclusive women-only networking club, who recently wrote on Instagram: “It’s important to make room for people who supported Hillary in 2016 who learned a tough lesson from her loss. Candidates like Alexandria have challenged my view of what’s possible in American politics.” Feminists who take issue with The Wing’s exclusivity and pricey annual membership fee rolled their eyes at what they saw as a blatant co-opting of the insurgent left’s popularity by capitalist entrepreneurs.

But Ocasio-Cortez seems to believe that it is possible to win over centrists, and even liberal Democrats. Organizing, she notes, is about persuasion, and bringing people—all kinds—closer to supporting your goals. “Being an organizer is very core to my identity,” she says. “And I think it’s a word that gets thrown around, and people don’t really understand what [the] tenets of organizing are.”

“How are we going to achieve the things that we want to achieve if your [average] young, upwardly mobile professional woman doesn’t realize that she’s part of a class struggle, too?” she continues. It’s crucial for the movement “to build power everywhere.”

“Does it mean that...The Wing is going to deliver the revolution?” Ocasio-Cortez adds with a smile. “No. But it also means that we can’t constantly be rolling our eyes at every person that goes to Starbucks.”



POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS FOR high-profile candidates are notoriously competitive environments in which staffers vie for status and influence—think *House of Cards* meets *Game of Thrones*. Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign, by contrast, feels more like a kibbutz or a socialist summer camp: Staffers seem averse to asserting, let alone exploiting, their precise roles in the campaign or their level of intimacy with the candidate. They don’t emphasize distinctions between volunteers and staff, junior or senior, experienced or not. “I’ve known



Alex for a long time,” one woman replied coolly when I asked if she was a staffer.

The campaign is fast becoming a training ground for a rising cohort of progressive political workers and media consultants like Naomi Burton and Nick Hayes, the production team behind Ocasio-Cortez’s viral campaign video. Burton and Hayes co-founded the Detroit-based media company Means of Production, whose goal is “to bring the skills and resources gleaned from the private sector to The Left.” Burton and Hayes are pros, but much of the campaign has been powered by capable amateurs with varying degrees of experience. As Ocasio-Cortez explained on Twitter, the campaign video was a group effort: “I wrote the script. My family is the closing shot. That’s my actual bodega. Detroit DSAers @means_tv worked with our team to film and tell the story. Volunteers coordinated the shoot.”

Everyone I spoke with praised the opportunities they’d been given, often in spite of their lack of experience. This is as much a strategy as a necessity: Being entrusted with real responsibility relatively quickly spurs a deeper commitment to the campaign and to politics in general. Several people I spoke with also mentioned having been encouraged to try out different roles within the campaign. “Most volunteers I worked with ended up wearing a lot of different hats,” said Jeff Latzer.

I first met Naureen Akhter, a slight woman sporting a purple head scarf, turquoise outfit, black backpack, and silver sandals, at an Eid festival hosted by the Bangladesh Society of the Bronx.

Volunteering for the campaign, Akhter said, was “such a huge learning experience. I’d never signed a petition or knocked on a door before.” One of the things she values most is how easy it was to get involved: “With this campaign, there’s room for anyone who’s willing to do the work.”

For Anika Legrand-Wittich, a soft-spoken, blond 20-year-old who first got involved at the end of her freshman year at Wesleyan and is now on leave from school to work for the campaign, opportunities to take on more responsibility abounded. I spoke with her at Ocasio-Cortez’s district office in Queens over Top 40 hits playing on the radio, cranked to top volume.

Starting out as an intern, Legrand-Wittich graduated to office manager a couple of weeks before the primary. She has since become the campaign’s deputy communications manager, a role in which she directs a small team of volunteers. “I have no experience in communications,” she said, laughing. “They give us the opportunities that most [campaigns] would not give young, inexperienced individuals—as long as you’re willing to put in the energy. It is great experience for young people who have none.”

ONE TUESDAY NIGHT IN AUGUST, I ATTENDED A “community conversation” hosted by Ocasio-Cortez and the progressive activist Ady Barkan at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Bronx. Around 200 people of all ages, backgrounds, and races were packed into a stuffy room,

Don’t tweet ill of... Some AOC supporters were upset by her praise for John McCain after his death in August.



“Old modes are not working the way they used to. Politics is local.”

—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Raina Lipsitz is a journalist who has written about gender, politics, and pop culture for a variety of outlets, including Al Jazeera America, Jewish Currents, and the online editions of The Atlantic, Cosmopolitan, and Glamour.

fanning themselves with event flyers to make up for the lack of air-conditioning. After a succession of speakers railed against the 1 percent and called for stronger unions, higher-paying jobs, and single-payer health care, Ocasio-Cortez briefly addressed the crowd, exhorting them not to show up just once, but to join a movement and commit to regular action.

Ajike Williams, a lifelong Democrat, was enthusiastic about Ocasio-Cortez’s commitment to passing Medicare for All and expanding affordable housing. Sean Butler, a self-described “Bernie guy” born and raised in the Bronx, told me he hadn’t heard much about Ocasio-Cortez before but appreciates her “Bernie-style politics” and her commitment to passing single-payer.

Looking at the crowd that night, a clear takeaway from Ocasio-Cortez’s success was that the left has more to gain from building cross-racial working-class solidarity than from preserving artificial distinctions. Not every working-class person is a white man in Kansas; nor is every white, working-class man in Kansas incapable of allying with women and people of color. That’s why Ocasio-Cortez campaigned there for white men like James Thompson and Brent Welder.

“The great evolution that we’ve had in [the last] two years is that we have really dismantled this idea of race or class,” she says. “We’ve actually realized that it’s only by uniting race and class that we can win. That’s what I think explains the surge in progressive-left candidates that are also of color—and particularly women of color are doing very well. Because it’s not an option for us” to separate multiple identities.

Another takeaway was that the progressive movement to which Ocasio-Cortez belongs is drawing disillusioned young people back into the political fold. Legrand-Wittich, the deputy communications manager, feels that people her age “don’t have faith in electoral politics. They’ll go to protests and get arrested—they just don’t believe that voting is the way to make change.” But “Alex showed that that’s not true. [Young people] think that money always wins out, and this is an example where it didn’t.”

For Ocasio-Cortez, this moment represents tremendous opportunity. The first step, she says, is about “figuring out how we continue to make our strategy and our arguments more sophisticated.” The American left hasn’t held power in a long time, so there’s a need to relearn what even having it feels like. “It doesn’t mean that we abandon activism, and it doesn’t mean that we abandon rigorous debate,” she explains. “It means that we add and we exercise and develop tools—in addition to activism, to organizing—into governance.”

On a personal level, it’s also an enormous responsibility. Ocasio-Cortez has been all but charged with leading—or at least representing—the progressive wave. That’s why it helps to be part of something stronger and bigger than just one person. “If we remain committed,” she says, “I really do believe that we can change this country a lot faster than people think.” ■



IN A CAMPAIGN AD RELEASED IN APRIL, RICHARD Ojeda, a Democrat running for an open seat in West Virginia's Third Congressional District, appears washing his face over the bathroom sink, shirtless, with a tattoo that reads "Sapper"—military slang for a combat engineer—clearly visible across his back. What you're expecting next is a paean to patriotism draped in the American flag. And you get it, eventually—but first, there's a twist: "I never dreamed that I would come home only to find children in my own backyard that have it worse than the kids I saw in Afghanistan," Ojeda says in the voice-over.

That dissonance—between the ideal of America that

inspired his military service and the realities of the down-trodden district where he grew up—is what motivated Ojeda to enter politics. It's also a major part of what he once found alluring in the "America First" rhetoric of Donald Trump's presidential campaign.

If he hadn't joined the Army, Ojeda says, his options after graduating from Logan High School in 1988 would have been to dig coal or sell dope. By the time he retired 24 years later, there was a lot more dope, and a lot less coal, in the district, whose largest city, Huntington, is often portrayed as the national epicenter of the opioid crisis.

On the wall of Ojeda's old campaign office hangs a sign that states: BIG PHARMA CAN GO TO HELL.

RICHARD OJEDA'S Politics OF Regret

**Can a former Trump voter win over
West Virginia Democrats?**

ROWAN MOORE GERETY





Like close to 80 percent of Logan County's voters, Ojeda supported Trump in 2016, even as he won a seat to represent the area as a Democrat in the State Senate. He has since become one of those elusive figures whose reported existence lures so many envoys from the DC press corps on safaris in Appalachia: a contrite Trump voter willing to tell it like it is.

Lately, Ojeda has been playing with the politics of regret: signaling remorse over his support for Trump to the Democratic base (and Democratic donors), while being careful not to alienate West Virginians whose own reservations about the president haven't been raised above a whisper. It's an awkward dance, largely because of Trump's enduring popularity with Republicans. Many of the promises that Trump made during the presidential campaign effectively asked voters to suspend their disbelief: to have faith, despite his inherited fortune, his many bankruptcies, and his record of stiffing associates, that he really was the visionary deal-maker he played on TV, someone who would play tough with pharmaceutical companies and fight the erosion of the tax base. Trump has not kept these promises. Other planks in his platform—unleashing the full, repressive might of law enforcement on America's immigrant communities, or pumping the brakes on federal environmental regulations—have been easier for the president to deliver on. White evangelicals appear to be getting the full measure of their devil's bargain on Supreme Court nominees, and for some voters, that will be enough. To hear Ojeda tell it, though, West Virginia is a state concerned most of all with “putting food on the table.”

While Trump continues to tout record highs in the stock market, Ojeda says the seams have started to show elsewhere. Before Trump's inauguration, the Carrier Corporation, which makes appliances, curried favor with the incoming administration by promising to save 1,100 manufacturing jobs in Indiana. A year later, as Trump signed a trillion-dollar tax cut to benefit corporate interests, Carrier's parent company relocated hundreds of union jobs to Mexico. This past summer, Midwestern soybean farmers suffered from Trump's simmering tariff war with China, a conflict sure to bring more casualties in the years to come. Is this the real face of “America First”? As Ojeda told *The New York Times* in July, “[Trump] said, ‘I’m going to take all them jobs from overseas and bring them to America.’ He hasn’t brought them to West Virginia. We still struggle on everything.”

COME NOVEMBER, OJEDA WILL BE ATTEMPTING to win as a Democrat in a congressional district that Trump carried by nearly 50 points, and it looks like he actually has a shot. Recent polls by Monmouth University and *The New York Times*/Siena College show him ahead by six points and trailing by eight, respectively, in a race against Republican Carol Miller, the majority whip of West Virginia's Statehouse. Miller, a bison farmer with a stake in a car-dealership chain, is the daughter of a GOP congressman running on a pro-gun, pro-industry, anti-immigration, and anti-Obamacare platform.

Ojeda used his first term in the State Senate to chal-

lenge the most important economic interests in West Virginia. He called for major tax hikes on any natural gas that gets shipped out of the state and said that executives who used financial maneuvers to strip coal miners of their pensions deserved to go to prison. A former high-school ROTC teacher himself, Ojeda warned his fellow state senators this past January that low pay and frustrations with benefits made the state's teaching workforce “a volcano that's about to erupt.” When the volcano blew the following month and 20,000 teachers went on strike, Ojeda took to Facebook Live to accuse Republicans in the state government of “destroying West Virginia's education system.”

But running as a populist maverick may not be enough to overcome his opponent's fund-raising advantage and partisan bona fides in a district previously represented by Evan Jenkins, a former Democrat who, aware of the seismic shifts in the state's politics, changed his party registration to run for Congress in 2013. Last month, Miller released an ad that featured a clip of her endorsement by Trump and tied Ojeda to the familiar villains of Fox News: “Nancy Pelosi and San Francisco liberals,” along with the donor class of the “radical left.” If Ojeda is elected, the ad suggested, he'd do little more than give the Democrats one more vote for impeachment.

“Everyone I know relies on coal. When coal is down, everything struggles.”

—Richard Ojeda

ON ELECTION DAY, OJEDA'S FATE DEPENDS LARGE-ly on how such attacks resonate with the people of the Third District. Will he feel the sting of running against a Republican endorsed by West Virginia's beloved president, or will he persuade enough voters that his evolving stance on Trump is one more sign of his independence? “‘Flip-flopping’ is only bad for you as a candidate if people disagree with your new position,” said Texas Tech political scientist Kevin Banda, reflecting on Ojeda's turnabout. “The question is: How many voters in that congressional district agree with him about Trump?”

During the 2016 presidential campaign, when Ojeda was running for the State Senate, coal was his overriding concern. “Everybody I know relies on coal. When coal is down, everything struggles,” Ojeda told me recently. He credits Trump with a modest rebound in coal production since last year, though the data suggest that it's due to factors beyond the president's control. “He has allowed the industry to continue moving,” Ojeda said. “But there are a lot of things that are in trouble. We have an opioid epidemic that is ripping us apart, and we only have 75 beds to address that issue in the Third Congressional District.” On that issue, he added, there's been no movement at all. “The coal miners are working. But there's more than just coal miners in West Virginia.”

When we spoke, Ojeda chose his words carefully and made sure to leave the door open to collaborating with Trump, who remains one of the most popular political figures in the state, “if he's got a good idea.... I'm not out here screaming and yelling, ‘Down with Trump!’”

Nor has he shied from criticizing the records of his fellow Democrats in West Virginia, where the party held an unbroken majority in the State Legislature from 1932 until 2006, and ended its statehouse run as “elitists who looked down on people here.” In refrains like that, Ojeda joins in the critique of his party culled from the culture-war playbook. Yet when it comes to actual culture-war issues, he comes down somewhere in the moderate wing of the Democratic Party—a pro-choice

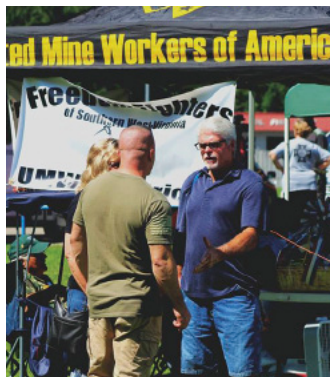
Rowan Moore
Gerety is the author of Go Tell the Crocodiles: Chasing Prosperity in Mozambique. A regular contributor to NPR, he has written for The Atlantic, Foreign Policy, and The Guardian.



supporter of DACA (the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals immigration policy) who thinks that marijuana should be removed from the Controlled Substances Act and that stoners should get to keep their guns. By and large, Ojeda has been content to let his opponent campaign on culture. He has been far more outspoken in his calls for the Democratic Party to focus on economic populism: supporting labor unions, protecting Social Security and Medicare, and rooting out the coziness between the political class and large corporations. In this respect, Ojeda seems to want to demonstrate the breadth of the appeal of a Bernie Sanders-style progressivism when it's uncoupled from the so-called culture wars. If Democrats are going to win in a state where Sanders carried the Democratic primary in all 55 counties, Ojeda thinks it will be around kitchen-table issues.

CHOOSING A CANDIDATE IS ALMOST ALWAYS AN exercise in quieting some internal dissonance. In Ojeda, voters in the Third District will have to reckon with more than most: a candidate who purports to be both pro-coal and pro-environment; the grandson of an undocumented Mexican immigrant who defends the sentiment behind the support for Trump's border wall.

On August 21, Trump kicked off his midterm campaigning for fellow Republicans with a rally in Charleston, West Virginia. The goal of the rally was to boost former state attorney general Patrick Morrisey in his race against Joe Manchin, thought to be one of the most vulnerable Democratic incumbents in the US Senate. But officials took the opportunity to aim their arrows at Democrats running across the state. Republican Governor Jim Justice appeared onstage and urged the crowd to help the president by sending Republicans to the House of Representatives. "We cannot, whatever we do, to God above, we cannot put Ojeda on this man," Justice said, standing beside Trump. Two days later, a man called in to talk about the rally on WVOW, a radio station in the heart of the Third District that bills itself as "the voice of the coal fields."



Yours and mine:
Ojeda addressing the United Mine Workers of America.

"Even if voters don't like what Ojeda is saying, they like where he stands."

—Robert Rupp,
professor at
West Virginia
Wesleyan College

One on one:
Ojeda sits next to a volunteer outside his campaign headquarters in Logan, West Virginia.



He began with a statement of loyalty: "President Trump loves West Virginia—he knows that we're behind him." But the caller took issue with the governor. "I know he's a coal operator...and he's creating jobs, and for that I'm thankful," he said of Justice, a billionaire whose holdings include dozens of mining companies active in West Virginia. "But when he slurred Mr. Ojeda, he lost me."

The caller didn't identify himself on-air, but it wasn't hard to get a sense of his politics. "I'm getting tired of being called a Nazi," he said, lamenting the fact that, as he put it, the national Democratic Party has "been hijacked by communists."

But he'd done his research on Ojeda, the man added. "I've watched everything I could about Richie on YouTube, you know, like his speeches and stuff. Richie, I believe, he has got this ideology: He's gonna make the gas companies put a little more in the kitty for the state of West Virginia, unlike the old coal companies and the timber companies that just grabbed it all up and run off." Faced with a choice between a populist who communes with "communists" and a member of the 1 percent from his president's party, the choice, for this man, seemed obvious.

That Ojeda is in the running at all owes something to the unusual political makeup of West Virginia. "From my perspective, West Virginia looks a lot like the American South did from the mid- to late '60s to the late '90s," said Banda, the political scientist from Texas Tech. That is, it's a state where many voters have held on to their Democratic Party registration and continued to vote for Democrats in local races, while supporting Republican candidates in federal elections in ever-larger numbers. "I sort of wonder whether West Virginia is lagging behind the national environment, and it's on its way to catching up," Banda added, noting that Governor Justice is a case in point: a Republican turned Democrat turned Republican again.

"This is not about the message; it is about the messenger," said Robert Rupp, a professor of history and political science at West Virginia Wesleyan College, speaking to the *Los Angeles Times* recently. "Even if voters don't like what Ojeda is saying, they like where he stands." That's something Ojeda's team—which includes a campaign manager who continued to work as a long-haul trucker well into the primary and a communications director whose last job was as a cashier for Dollar General—is counting on. "People here are loyal to the president, but they're loyal to their own as well," Madalin Sammons, the communications director, told me.

Trump was back in West Virginia for another rally in late September, and this time he took aim at Ojeda directly, calling him "stone cold crazy" and "a total whacko," though he didn't refer to him by name. "I've seen this person," Trump said, throwing up his arms in mock surprise. "You can't have that person in Congress."

The sheer force of partisanship could be enough to keep Ojeda from attracting more conservative support. But given that Democrats still outnumber Republicans, 45 to 31 percent, as a share of registered voters in West Virginia, Ojeda remains optimistic: "We just have to give them a reason to get out and vote."

Feeling the Bern:
In Sanders's 2016
campaign, millions of
Americans embraced
the banner of
socialism.



IN SEARCH OF THE LOST REPUBLIC

Americans once believed that their government belonged to them. Can we again?

by D.D. GUTTENPLAN

AS HE WAS LEAVING INDEPENDENCE HALL ONE morning in 1789, Benjamin Franklin was accosted by a Philadelphia woman. “Well, Doctor, what have we got,” Elizabeth Powel is said to have demanded, “a republic or a monarchy?” Franklin’s reply was brisk: “A republic, Madam—if you can keep it.”

Can we keep it? For many of us, that question became painfully salient on the morning of November 9, 2016. I’d been covering the election since August 2015, when after the first Republican debate, I’d written that Donald Trump’s “unpredictability—his manifest inability to respect the norms of party, civility, or any institution or

structure not bearing the Trump name, preferably in gilded letters—makes him the campaign equivalent of crack cocaine.” Though I didn’t think any of the other occupants of the Republican clown car could beat Trump, I assumed the Republican National Committee would find some other way to stop him.

Over the months that followed, I attended Trump rallies in half a dozen states, from Florida to New Hampshire. But while I couldn’t help watching Trump out of the corner of my eye, fascinated by the reinvention of a man whose first brush with bankruptcy I’d covered as a writer at *The Village Voice* and New York’s *Newsday* in the 1980s, my main focus was elsewhere.

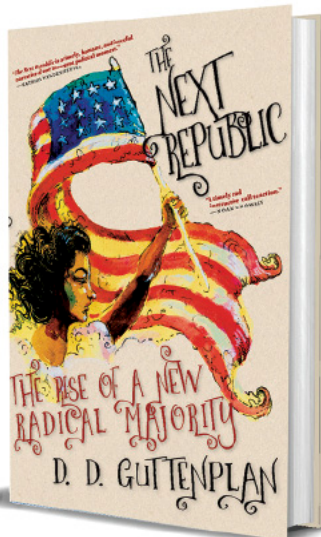
Assuming that the campaign would be boring, I decided to concentrate not on the candidates, but on the voters, volunteers, activists, and movements that make up the political ground on which elections are fought. I was wrong about the campaign. But I was right in thinking that there was a deeper story to be found far from the lights and the cameras.

Walt Whitman heard America singing. I heard a country screaming—at itself, at shadows, at enemies domestic and foreign. “Lock her up!” “Build the wall!” But I also heard something else underneath all the shouting, a collective gasp of recognition and amazement. I’d heard it most clearly in a high-school gym in February 2016—on the night Bernie Sanders won the New Hampshire primary. Sanders himself was elated, reminding his supporters that when he’d begun campaigning, “we had no campaign organization and we had no money.”

Only it wasn’t Sanders I was listening to. It was the audience—a mix of old radicals and young activists, tied-dyed grandmothers from California and the Carolinas celebrating with thick-waisted older men in union windbreakers and college students in blue “Feel the Bern” T-shirts. Could Bernie go all the way? That magical night, with Nevada and Michigan still ahead of us, anything seemed possible. But what I remember even more vividly than that moment of wild hope was the sensation of looking across the packed gym and being astonished at how many of us there were—and realizing that everyone else was just as surprised. (Though it being New Hampshire and a Sanders rally, the crowd was overwhelmingly white.)

For decades, the media had relentlessly reminded us just how far outside the mainstream we were. In a country where Ronald Reagan and Lee Atwater had made “liberal” a badge of dishonor, a label to be shunned, where did that leave those of us further left? Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, nobody bothered calling us “communists” anymore, but to call yourself a socialist, as Sanders had done, was an invitation to derision. We’d watched in dismay as the bankers deregulated by Bill Clinton crashed the economy—only to be bailed out by Barack Obama, while millions of ordinary Americans lost their homes and their savings. We’d seen George W. Bush’s National Security Agency spy on millions of Americans—and Barack Obama’s Justice Department try to lock up the whistle-blowers. We’d witnessed the War on Terror give way to the war against Iraq, and heard the cries to bomb Damascus and Tehran. So when Bernie stood up and said, “Enough is enough,” we were ready to stand with him.

But we weren’t prepared for what happened next. Grown used to our own marginality, we weren’t prepared to discover that there were literally millions of us, in every part of the country. It must be said that Bernie wasn’t prepared either. A campaign that began somewhere between a quixotic gesture and a protest movement came close enough to winning the nomination to scare the hell out of the Democratic Party establishment—which hadn’t exactly kept its thumbs off the scale during the primaries. Socialism is no longer toxic; indeed, polls show



Grown used to our own marginality, we weren't prepared to discover that there were literally millions of us, in every part of the country.

D.D. Guttenplan is an editor at large at The Nation and the author of The Next Republic: The Rise of a New Radical Majority (Seven Stories Press), from which this excerpt has been adapted.

that, among younger Americans, most think it sounds like a pretty good idea.

And yet here we are, with Trump in the White House, Republicans in control of both houses of Congress, and Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court. The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci warned that while the old order “is dying and the new cannot be born...a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” The headlines—and Trump’s Twitter account—provide new examples on a daily basis. Yet there are also many signs of rebirth.

For all Trump’s noisy promises of action on gun control and immigration reform and health care, his tax bill’s blank check to GOP donors may be the Republicans’ sole legislative achievement. But his administration’s rollback of federal regulations protecting consumers, the environment, and American workers is likely to be equally damaging, while his quiet reshaping of the federal judiciary in favor of economic privilege and social reaction may last for decades to come. With Trump and Mike Pence in the White House, and a conservative majority on the Court, decisions that once seemed like settled law—same-sex marriage, legal abortion, the right to join a union; indeed, the very right to citizenship itself for all born inside this country—may now come under attack. These are all fights we cannot afford to lose.

And so, despite the temptation to mourn, we have to organize. Because if we can’t rely on the president, or the Congress, or the courts, we have no choice but to rely on one another. There are some in immediate peril who need our help, our energy, and our solidarity. There are others—many, many others—who are already fighting, but who may not see how their battle fits into a bigger picture.

Ever since Election Day, I’ve tried to adopt “No more wishful thinking” as my own political mantra. All the same, in my reporting I’ve found ample grounds not just for hope, but for optimism. The United States may be a continental power and a global empire, but it is not an island, isolated from the currents of world politics. You don’t have to be a historical determinist or an orthodox Marxist—I am neither—to see a surge of majoritarian revolt spreading across the globe, from the “pink tide” in Latin America to the democratic ferment that sparked the Arab Spring to the rise of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain.

Not all of these challenges to power will succeed. So in trying to map out how we in the US might, as they say in New England, “get there from here,” I’ve been guided by two principles. The first is to stay close to the grass roots. The second is that history is essential—not just the first draft of history provided by journalism, but the awareness of possibility that only history can provide.

I wanted to break through the collective amnesia that lets Americans forget what we have accomplished together in the past—the audacity that let a colony defy the most powerful nation on earth, the courage and solidarity that defeated racial slavery, the democratic confidence that took on fascism in Europe and began the

work of building economic security at home. Each of these earlier achievements—these lost republics—was only partially successful. If we are to complete the work, or even to advance it, we need to remind ourselves both of what we once accomplished—and of the reasons why previous efforts fell short.

It was Tom Paine's *Common Sense* that first gave the word “republic” widespread currency as an American virtue. So in using “republic” to mean a time when Americans felt that their government genuinely belonged to them, rather than being the tool or mechanism by which a particular class or section exercises power, I am not so much adding my own gloss as selecting among the many uses. Besides, I see little need, or prospect, of improving upon Abraham Lincoln when he spoke simply of “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Like socialism, that still sounds like a good idea to me. But discerning readers will also detect sympathy for another ideal, almost equally discredited, namely populism. By which I mean both the historical American movements that comprised the 19th-century Populist revolt, and a contemporary sympathy for movements that are frankly majoritarian, trusting in democracy rather than the discovery of correct doctrine. Though I was often frightened and appalled by the things I saw and heard at Trump rallies, Hillary Clinton's description of his voters as a “basket of deplorables”—and her media cheerleaders' eagerness to double down on that contempt—still strikes me as both personally despicable

Whatever else it is, populism has always represented a revolt of the people against the elites—and in that fight, I know which side I'm on.

and politically dangerous. Whatever else it is, populism has always represented a political and cultural revolt of the people against the elites—and in that fight, I know which side I'm on.

There is a serious strategic point to be made here as well. While the right might prefer aristocracy, or a plutocracy in which the business of America really is business, we on the left can't just dismiss the people—no matter how much they may disappoint us. Petulance is not politics. There is simply no alternative to the hard work of assembling a majority coalition.

We are at a crossroads. Though nearly 3 million more Americans voted for Hillary Clinton than for Donald Trump, many of us did so despite believing that American politics was broken, and with no real enthusiasm for the “four more years” her campaign seemed to offer. Being against Donald Trump wasn't enough to win the election, and though it happily was sufficient motivation to drive millions of women—and their male allies—onto the streets to protest his inauguration, mere opposition won't bring us to the next republic either.

As Jim Hightower, the 10-gallon-hatted godfather of Texas populism, once told me, “It's not enough to be for the farmer. You gotta be against these bastards who are trying to run over the farmer!” But as Naomi Klein points out, “No is not enough. We also need to lay out our Yes.” Because it is the sum of those yesses, marching together, working together, striking together, and voting together, that will bring us—together—to the next republic. ■

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Letters

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The Gore-y Truth

I must take exception with Jason Mark's denigrating reference to Al Gore in "The Climate-Wrecking Industry," [Sept. 24/Oct. 1]. At the beginning and end of his otherwise honest piece, he accuses Gore of telling us to solve climate change by using better light bulbs. Gore has been a lifelong environmentalist. He was co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Since founding the Climate Reality Project in 2006, he has trained over 12,000 people from 126 countries to be "climate leaders." He also convinced India to opt into the Paris climate accord by cutting a deal for free US solar-panel technology, thereby preventing the construction of 400 new coal-fired power plants.

In this fight for our lives, it is often difficult to keep clear who the real enemies are. I doubt there are many statesmen or world leaders who lose more sleep over climate change than Al Gore. Let's shine a light bulb on that.

SUSAN R. DEWAR
BLANDING, UTAH

Yes! Let's hold the climate wreckers responsible in all the ways Jason Mark describes. But why minimize the fact that these companies need our purchases to prosper? It means we have immense power over them. We can undo them in so many enjoyable ways: Retire the car (walk, bike). Grow food or buy from local farmers. Compost "waste." Buy used. Fix what breaks. Cut screen time. Revel in nature. Yes, changing a few light bulbs is ho-hum, but walking in a new direction is an adventure. Eight billion

people can't live push-button lives.

KAY MARIE SATHER
TUCSON, ARIZ.

Jason Mark Replies

I recently saw Al Gore give a speech at the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco. The performance was electrifying: He paced and thundered like a Baptist minister as he warned of "fire tornadoes" and decried the way that "each night on television is like hiking through the Book of Revelations."

I share Susan Dewar's respect for Gore, who is indisputably an elder statesman of the climate movement. Few American political leaders match his prescience and passion on climate change. And yet it's fair to say that Gore's prescient urgency was not met with a bold enough political imagination. Gore's *Inconvenient Truth*-era theory of change simply didn't pass the sniff test, which is why it was uninspiring. Frankly, the same could be said for much of the US environmental movement of a decade ago.

In all fairness to Gore, 2006 was a more innocent time. Hurricane Sandy hadn't yet torn through New York City, global warming hadn't yet steamrolled one heat record after another, and the Republican Party hadn't yet been wholly taken over by science know-nothings. (Remember Newt Gingrich sitting on a sofa with Nancy Pelosi, promising a bipartisan effort on climate?) Al Gore was not alone in underestimating how reckless the climate wreckers would be with our one and only atmosphere.

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Books & the Arts.



BEFORE THE LAW

Kafka's afterlives

by EVAN KINDLEY

When Franz Kafka was dying, he left very specific instructions: "Everything I leave behind me in the way of notebooks, manuscripts, letters, my own and other people's, sketches and so on, is to be burned unread and to the last page."

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Kafka was 40 at the time of his death from tuberculosis in 1924 and not yet a famous writer. He had published only two collections of short stories, one novella, and a few scattered texts in obscure Czech literary magazines, all of it to scant notice. Most of what we now know as the Kafka oeuvre—including all three of his novels and the majority of his short fiction—was marked for obliteration.

The person charged with executing

Kafka's Last Trial

The Case of a Literary Legacy

By Benjamin Balint

Norton. 288 pp. \$26.95

this merciless sentence was Max Brod, Kafka's closest literary friend. Both men had been denizens of a small but lively community of largely Jewish, German-speaking Czech writers known as the Prague Circle. The pair had met as

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM ROBINSON

students at Charles University in Prague in 1902 and bonded immediately; they traveled together, collaborated on an unfinished novel, and influenced each other's writing in myriad ways. "We completed each other," Brod later remembered, "and had so much to give one another."

Brod, in particular, felt a "fanatical veneration" for his friend's talent and took it as his mission to combat the depressive Kafka's extreme reluctance to publish his work. "I wrested from Kafka nearly everything he published [during his lifetime] either by persuasion or guile," Brod recalled. "At times I stood over him like a rod, drove him and forced him...again and again by new means and new tricks.... What mattered to me was the thing itself, the helping of a friend even against the wish of the friend." When Kafka finally did publish a book—the 1912 short-story collection *Meditation*—Brod was there to give it one of its few reviews, which included the following statement: "I could easily imagine someone getting hold of this book and finding his whole life altered from that moment on, and realizing he would become a new person."

This was the dynamic, then, between Kafka and Brod: the reluctant genius and the relentless promoter. Knowing this, Kafka's infamous instructions look a little different—not proof of a perverse drive toward self-destruction so much as a final hedge. As Benjamin Balint notes in *Kafka's Last Trial*, his new history of the writer's legacy and the endless complications it has entailed:

It was as though even in self-renunciation Kafka was beset by indecision. He left the execution to Brod, the very man who since the beginnings of their friendship felt that Kafka's self-condemnation was several shades too harsh.

Perhaps Kafka didn't really want his work destroyed, but wasn't sure that he wanted it published, either. Or perhaps he wasn't sure what he wanted; or what he wanted was not to decide.

Such half-decisions and ambivalence are a recurring motif in the story Balint tells in *Kafka's Last Trial*. The actors include not only individuals like Kafka and Brod and their heirs, but nation-states and scholarly institutions, each one jockeying for position

and the moral high ground, denouncing the others' intentions and telling different stories about what is really at stake. In this saga, moments of resolution and fidelity are rare. The norm is hesitation, equivocation, and ambiguity.

Brod, of course, did not burn Kafka's writings. Instead, he published them in a series of editions that he prepared himself, working from the often fragmentary unfinished manuscripts that Kafka left behind. He also wrote the first biography of Kafka, three separate critical studies of his work, various memoirs of their friendship, and, in 1954, a theatrical adaptation of *The Castle*. Though Brod continued to turn out books of his own, by the time he reached middle age, he was already seen as an adjunct to Kafka. "In the eyes of the world," Irving Howe wrote in 1947, Brod "has become a mere figure in the Kafka myth; he has lost independent existence."

Brod died in 1968 in Tel Aviv.

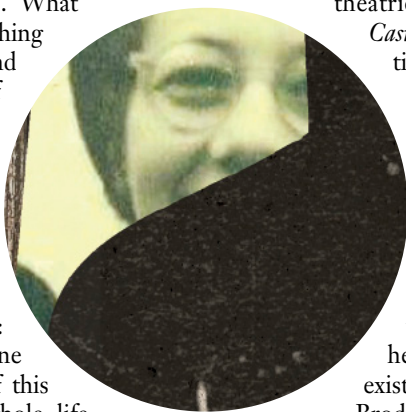
He had emigrated there almost three decades earlier, in 1939, following the Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia (and after attempting, unsuccessfully, to land a teaching job in the United States with a letter of recommendation from Thomas Mann). In Tel Aviv, he befriended Esther Hoffe, a fellow German-speaking Czech refugee. Hoffe became Brod's secretary, but she was more than that: He called her "my creative partner, my most stringent critic, my help-mate and ally." Hoffe didn't receive a salary, but in return for her work, Brod bequeathed her all of the Kafka manuscripts, as well as appointing her literary executor of his own estate.

Legally, there is some question as to whether these items were Brod's to give. Some were clearly his property, like the personal letters and the manuscripts that Kafka had given him during his lifetime. But many other items were things that Brod had seized from Kafka's desk after his death; furthermore, insofar as he had a legal right to these documents, it was only in order to destroy them. Nevertheless, after Brod's death, Hoffe took possession of the manuscripts, along with Brod's papers, and stored them in safe-deposit boxes in a Tel Aviv bank as well as in her apartment (where, according to one reliable eyewitness,

they were in frequent contact with her many cats).

This is where a personal matter becomes clouded by official intrigue, and the story becomes Kafkaesque, in the colloquial sense. In 1973, the state of Israel attempted to prevent Hoffe from selling several pieces of Kafka's correspondence with Brod. The Kafka papers, they argued, were Jewish cultural assets and thus protected under the Israeli Archives Law of 1955, affecting documents and artifacts "which, irrespective of where they are found, are deemed relevant to the study of the nation's history, its people, the state, and society." An Israeli family-court judge ruled in favor of Hoffe, granting her the right to do as she liked with her property. When Hoffe died in 2007, at the age of 101, she left the Kafka manuscripts, along with control of the Brod estate, to her daughters, Eva and Ruth. At this point, Israel took action again, challenging the probate of her will and once more claiming that the Kafka papers were cultural assets and, thus, state property. The case dragged on for years until, in 2016, it was finally decided by Israel's Supreme Court, which ruled that the Brod and Kafka materials were, in fact, cultural assets and must be transferred to the National Library of Israel.

Especially since the Second World War, when his works were taken as prophecies of Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism, Kafka has been read as the poet of arbitrary authority. In his works, particularly *The Trial* and *The Castle*, mysterious bureaucratic organizations reach out and crush the hopes of hapless individuals. While it is tempting to view Israel's actions as an example of just such authoritarian overreach—and this is certainly how the Hoffes saw it—from another point of view the government's position is reasonable. Leaving aside the issue of whether the collection belonged specifically in Israel, the state's broader contention was that Brod's and Kafka's papers belonged not in private hands but in an archive—i.e., that literary artifacts have a cultural importance that exceeds their monetary value, and therefore they deserve to be public property. There was a legal rationale for this as well as a literary one: Brod had stipulated in his will that he wanted his papers placed in a "public archive in Israel or abroad." Neither Hoffe nor her daughters followed this request, preferring to hoard the materials (Brod's and Kafka's alike) for themselves. This, alongside the cultural-asset argument, proved to be a key point in the state's case: The Hoffe





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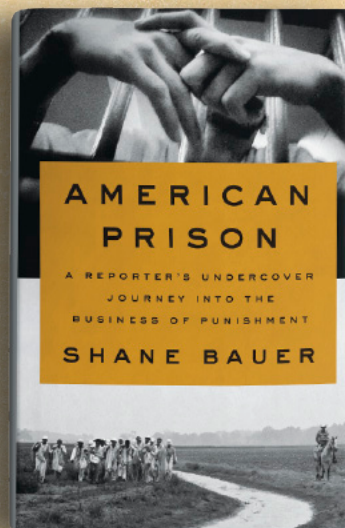
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family had violated Brod's wishes. Instead of entrusting his work and Kafka's to the public, they had secreted it away and exploited it for their own financial gain.

The problem was not just that the Hoffes were selling Kafka's papers; it was also the identity of the buyer.

In 1988, Esther Hoffe put the manuscript of *The Trial* up for auction, where it was purchased, via an intermediary, by the German Literature Archive in Marbach for £1 million—at the time, the highest price ever paid for a modern manuscript. The archive presumably planned to buy further Kafka artifacts, if not the entire collection, from the Hoffes; it was thus named as an interested party in Israel's suit against them.

The Marbach archive's position in the case was a delicate one. While it had the financial resources to buy Kafka's manuscripts and the scholarly resources to process and maintain them, there were obvious political reasons why the acquisition of an important Jewish writer's papers by a German institution might be questioned. Israeli scholars attacked the archive in the press. "They say the papers will be safer in Germany," the Israeli historian Otto Dov Kulka wrote in 2010. "The Germans will take very good care of them. Well, the Germans don't have a very good history of taking care of Kafka's things. They didn't take good care of his sisters"—all three of whom were killed by the Nazis. Elsewhere, the issue was linked to the larger one of Israeli statehood: "[T]he struggle to keep Brod's archive in Israel is one of the most important of the struggles over our continued existence here," the literary scholar Nuri Pagi insisted in 2011.

The German Literature Archive "could not risk the appearance of 'seizing' cultural heritage from the Jewish state," Balint notes, even as it insisted that Kafka, who wrote in German and was influenced primarily by German literature, should rightfully be considered a German author. German Kafka scholars, for their part, objected to the Israelis' nationalist argument (although, of course, it was in their own national interest to do so). "To speak here of Israeli cultural assets seems to me absurd," Reiner Stach, the author of a definitive three-volume Kafka biography, wrote in a German newspaper. "In Israel, there is neither a complete edition of Kafka's works, nor a single street named after him. And if

you wish to look for Brod in Hebrew, you have to go to a second-hand bookshop."

Balint backs up Stach's assertion: "Kafka never became part of the Israeli canon, or of the project of national revival," he writes.

"There has never been a Kafka cult in Israel, as there was in Germany, France, the United States, and elsewhere." He ascribes this not only to the Israeli resistance to German-language literature after the Holocaust, but also to the national ideology of hardy self-sufficiency, which was in sharp contrast to Kafka's worldview:

Concerned with the practical demands of agriculture, urban planning, and social welfare, the first generation of Israelis had no ear for either the masochistic strains in Kafka's imagination or his sensibility of failure. Kafka's stories somehow didn't befit the spirit of the Israeli Jew, to whom Joshua and King David seemed closer than Joseph K. or Gregor Samsa.

Of all the knotty literary, political, historical, and legal issues involved in the Hoffe case, Balint, who is an Israeli citizen, is clearly most compelled by the question of Kafka's Jewishness, and what bearing it may have on Israel's attempt to claim his work as a cultural asset. That claim makes a good deal of sense in the case of Brod, who was a passionate Zionist even before he emigrated to Tel Aviv and spent the final decades of his life there.

With Kafka, however, the evidence for an elective affinity with Zionism, or even with Jewishness, is mixed. Like Brod, Kafka was born into a basically secular Jewish family. In an unsent letter to his father, Kafka refers to his Jewish heritage as "an insufficient scrap...a mere nothing, a joke—not even a joke.... It all dribbled away while you were passing it on."

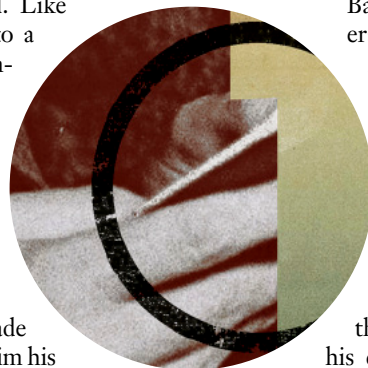
As an adult, Kafka made inconsistent efforts to reclaim his Jewish identity. He was passionately interested in Yiddish folk music and theater, and, toward the end of his life, became consumed by the study of Hebrew. Kafka attended the 11th World Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1913 (he was in the city on business

anyway), but he was largely indifferent if not hostile to political expressions of Jewishness. In a letter to his fiancée, Felice Bauer, Kafka reported: "I sat in the Zionist congress as if it were an event totally alien to me, felt myself cramped and distracted by much that went on." To Brod, he wrote: "It is hard to imagine anything more useless than such a congress." In another letter, Kafka described himself as "excluded from every great soul-sustaining community on account of [my] non-Zionist (I admire Zionism and am nauseated by it), nonpracticing Judaism." Balint notes that "Kafka, whose writing was born of the impossibility of belonging, pulled away from offers of collective belonging." Kafka himself summed up his attitude in 1914 with a joke worthy of Groucho Marx: "What have I in common with the Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself."

Kafka's *Last Trial* tells a sprawling, unwieldy story, and Balint is not to be blamed for all the confusions it presents, many of which are inherent to the material. But some of his structural decisions do make the story harder to follow. Chronologically, the book jumps around constantly, to disorienting effect. Legal proceedings begin and end and begin again; legal officials multiply unnervingly. For the most part, Balint alternates between historical chapters dealing with Kafka and Brod and their legacies, and journalistic chapters detailing the course of Israel's case against the Hoffes. This juxtaposition makes a certain dramatic sense. But even within the chapters, Balint leaps from one decade to another and then back again, often at the expense of clarity. (Recall that Kafka's stories, for all their narrative complexities, are stubbornly linear.)

Balint is also a far better literary critic than he is a legal historian: While he acquires himself well enough in sketching the general juridical context of Israeli law, he doesn't seem nearly as interested in the finer points of legal argument as he is in overarching literary and theoretical questions, and his discussions of the lawyers' statements and judges' decisions are mostly perfunctory.

Of all the players in this crowded drama, Balint seems to have had the most access to Eva Hoffe, Esther's younger daughter. (Eva's elder sister, Ruth, died in 2012.) Eva



is introduced to us in the book's very first sentence, indicating that we are to regard her as the book's protagonist. Later, we even find her awakening "from uneasy dreams," like Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis*. While Balint stays relatively impartial and stops short of advocating for Eva's position, a certain sympathy toward her suffuses *Kafka's Last Trial*. Her strong emotional attachment to the Brod papers is emphasized: They are, she tells Balint, "like limbs of my body." After the Israeli Supreme Court decides against her, Eva says she feels "as though I'd been raped," and directs her hairdresser to shave her head.

The reason for this despair is, ostensibly, her close familial connection to Brod—"You must understand that Max was a member of our family," she tells Balint—and not the catastrophic loss of revenue and prestige that comes from losing access to the Kafka papers. Indeed, Eva affects not to care about the Kafka portion of the estate at all: "What do I want from Kafka?... Kafka for me has been a disaster. They mixed Kafka into Brod's estate in order to take it all away from me." Yet she sees herself as a Kafka protagonist of sorts, a helpless individual up against a cruel, implacable state apparatus. "If this were a tug-of-war contest, I'd have no chance," she tells Balint. "I'm up against immensely powerful opponents, immensely."

Balint goes along with Eva's abject self-portrayal, to an extent. "Like the man from the country in Kafka's parable 'Before the Law,' Eva Hoffe remained stranded and confounded outside the door of the law," he writes, continuing:

There would be no redemptive revelation for her. She did not understand the law or the intricacies of legal reasoning, but she did understand the sentence. Her inheritance was the trial itself. Paradoxically, she had inherited her disinheritance, inherited the impossibility of carrying out her mother's will. She possessed only her dispossession.

But "Before the Law"—first published as a stand-alone story in 1915 and later incorporated into the manuscript of *The Trial*—is a famously ambiguous text, and the comparison of Eva Hoffe to Kafka's "man from the country" can be understood in more than one way. In Balint's reading, the man

is the victim of arbitrary, awesome power. He is denied access to the law with no reason given, left "stranded and confounded." Here again we find the Kafkaesque as it has entered the lexicon of literary (and political) cliché: a simple story of the desperate little victim and the oppressive official order.

It is not entirely clear, however, that "Before the Law" is about dispossession or persecution; it can equally be seen as a parable about refusing responsibility, or waiting too long to accept it. While it's true that the doorkeeper refuses

to give his permission, at no point is the man from the country actually prevented from entering the door to the law, which always stands open: The choice to remain outside is ultimately, Kafka suggests, his own. Furthermore, at the end of the story, as the man lies dying after years of waiting at the door and wonders why no one else has ever tried

to enter it, the doorkeeper tells him: "No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended for you. I am now going to shut it." The implication is that the man from the country could have passed through the door at any time, and even that he has shirked his duty by not doing so.

Another interpretation, then, of the Hoffe's story—in its way equally Kafkaesque, though not in the conventional sense—would be this: Max Brod, in his will, indicated the door that he expected Esther Hoffe to enter, the door that led to the archive, a door meant only for her. It is worth noting here that Brod didn't simply grant the documents to the National Library himself; he left that instead to the discretion of his secretary. Is it possible that Brod, like Kafka before him, *wanted* to be disobeyed?

In any case, for her own reasons—financial? emotional?—Esther never entered the archive. Her reluctance recalls not only the man in "Before the Law" but all the other hesitant Kafka characters as well, such as the creature in "The Burrow" (a text quoted in another connection by Balint) who speaks of "the childish desire never to go back to the burrow at all but rather to settle in here near the entrance and find my happiness in realizing all the time how the burrow would keep me secure if I were inside it."

Eva, in her turn, also refused to enter the archive. Why? Perhaps because, by "settl[ing] in near the entrance," she could

continue to enjoy a special kind of status, the kind that comes from possessing something that other people desire and yet still contriving to feel powerless. There is some satisfaction, after all, in feeling like there is an official conspiracy against you, that you are weak and the world is strong: This satisfaction, translated into aesthetic terms, is one of the hallmarks of Kafka's work. On a more prosaic level, of course, there was also a financial incentive: As long as Eva had Kafka's papers in her possession, she could continue to profit from the sale of individual items.

Yet another possibility: Eva should not be understood as the man from the country at all, but rather the doorkeeper—the one who delays another's entrance to the law arbitrarily. Could it be that she belongs not on the side of Joseph K., but on the side of his tormentors? In his epilogue, Balint notes that one "of Kafka's great motifs, returning like a refrain, is that the Law, radiant but inaccessible, is guarded by fallible, petty, even unscrupulous gatekeepers.... The representatives of the Law, however powerful, are all of them fallen men. Guardians, however devoted, do not always understand what they are guarding." Maybe literature is like that, too. ■



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A COMMUNITY OF DEFEAT

German life in the 20th century

by RICHARD J. EVANS

For the great majority of Germans, the 20th century was a time of massive disruptions and discontinuities, marked by drastic changes of regime, periodic economic catastrophes, hugely destructive wars, and cataclysmic social upheavals. Some years ago, the historian Detlev Peukert pointed out that a young German man born

between 1900 and 1910 would have gone through adolescence during World War I, with its privations, its food shortages, and its deaths and diseases, notably the vast influenza epidemic that killed countless people at the war's end. He would have come of age during the postwar hyperinflation, when German money lost almost all its value, and would have entered the labor market just as the worldwide economic slump raised unemployment levels to more than a third of the entire workforce. Experiencing Germany's defeat in the war and

Broken Lives

How Ordinary Germans Experienced the 20th Century

By Konrad H. Jarausch

Princeton University. 464 pp. \$35

the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles, which saddled the country with territorial losses, restrictions on its military capacities, and huge financial reparations, he would have lived through the revolution of 1918 that overthrew the kaiser, the chronic political

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instability and violence of the early Weimar years, the political paralysis of the early 1930s, and the collapse of the republic with the Nazi seizure of power in 1933.

By 1935, he would have been drafted into the armed forces, and between 1939 and 1945 would have fought in World War II, the most destructive conflict in history, in which more than 5 million German soldiers were killed, over half a million German civilians lost their lives, and most German cities were reduced to rubble. After enduring a period of severe economic crisis, inflation, malnutrition, and black marketeering, he would have been in his middle years before he began to experience political stability and economic success in West Germany, if he was lucky enough to end up in that half of the country, or would have continued to suffer in the communist East, where dictatorship and deprivation remained the norm. No wonder people in West Germany in the 1950s were desperate for a quiet life. “No experiments!” as then-Chancellor Konrad Adenauer declared.

In his new book, *Broken Lives: How Ordinary Germans Experienced the 20th Century*, Konrad H. Jarausch, author of several accomplished histories of postwar Europe and modern Germany, examines not the life of Peukert’s imagined citizen, but rather those of Germans born into the generation that followed. Basing his account on 72 published and unpublished autobiographies, with particularly detailed attention paid to 17 of them, Jarausch is as interested in memory as he is in experience. The result is an engrossing and rewarding book that tells the story of 20th-century Germany from the individual perspectives of those who went through it and (mostly) somehow managed to survive. Clearly, as Jarausch says, their lives were repeatedly disrupted, their personal time lines broken by major and often devastatingly destructive events. And as these events unfolded, so their memories of the past changed as well.

Among the more surprising of Jarausch’s findings is that, in general, his subjects remembered the ill-fated Weimar Republic in positive terms and as a period of normality against which they measured the instabilities and catastrophes of the Nazi and early postwar

years. The 1920s saw Germans of this generation go through their childhood, and so perhaps for that reason they recalled the decade as idyllic compared with what came after. During Hitler’s Third Reich, politics and ideology were brought into everyday life and into every family. Some of Jarausch’s protagonists engaged in small acts of resistance, such as merely mumbling the required “Heil, Hitler!” greeting or hanging the smallest possible flag from their window on special days like Hitler’s birthday. Fanatical Nazis are rare in Jarausch’s sample; by 1939, many people were merely going through the motions of demonstrating the public support that the dictatorship required.

Nevertheless, despite the relentless promulgation of Nazi ideas in the revised school curriculum, through Nazi teachers, and by the leaders of Nazi youth organizations, many of the adolescents that Jarausch examines enjoyed being in the Hitler Youth or the League of German Girls, and fondly recalled the fun they’d had sitting around the campfire or tramping over the hills. A number of them confessed later that, as one of them put it, they “wanted to help in the building of the new, third, thousand-year Reich and to carry responsibility.” Some were completely swept away by the propaganda and considered it “good that the Nazis hold power,” as another one said. “They help Germany regain the greatness which it deserves.” Few of them mentioned the rabid anti-Semitism that permeated the ideological training of the youth organizations, including even the songs they sang.

A good number of Jarausch’s Germans, however, admitted to having been bored and irritated by the constant military drills and the persistent indoctrination that were part of the Nazi youth movement. They came to feel betrayed by the promises that the Nazis had held out to young people, and guilty about the extent to which they had allowed themselves to be seduced by the Nazi vision of the future. But what really changed their perspective was the war. Despite being taught constantly that military prow-

ess was the highest human achievement and heroism the noblest human quality, very few of the young men that Jarausch studied framed their reminiscences as tales of derring-do rather than of survival. From the tough and often humiliating training they underwent as raw military recruits to the experience of battle in Western Europe, Africa, the Balkans, and, from June 1941 on, the Eastern Front, they encountered brutality, violence, hardship, and death. The illusory belief in German victory that many of them shared in the early stages of the war vanished almost overnight after the Red Army’s destruction of the Sixth German Army at Stalingrad. After this point, early in 1943, the majority realized that the war was lost. They kept fighting out of loyalty to their comrades, and out of fear of being killed or, what was potentially almost as bad, captured by Soviet troops. Some admitted to being involved in atrocities against civilians, and most confessed they had learned in one way or another about the mass murder of European Jews at shooting sites or in camps on the Eastern Front. As the Soviets advanced inexorably toward Germany itself in 1944, the men carried on fighting, not least to defend their fatherland against the Bolshevik hordes that seemed hell-bent on destroying it. Only in the final stages did they begin to desert en masse, to flee in panic, or to lay down their arms and show the white flag.

For many who have read about the German military during the war, this may all be a familiar story. Where Jarausch breaks new ground is in portraying the war, and indeed the Third Reich as a whole, as a gendered experience. As far as the Nazi state was concerned, a woman’s role was to keep house and raise children (preferably lots of them).

For the younger women in Jarausch’s sample, the League of German Girls provided some sense of empowerment as they were given their own roles in life outside the constricting embrace of the family. Women, Jarausch emphasizes, were not merely victims: They collaborated with the regime from the outset, embraced Nazism’s ideals, or took part willingly in projects such as the “colonization” of the east, where Polish farmers were summarily ejected to make way for German settlers—a



"noble mission," as one woman described it. (Only later did she realize that her behavior toward the local Polish population, which included beating a boy for not minding the cows, had sown seeds of deep hatred that would eventually sprout into violence and revenge.) "I let myself be captured by a great lie," as another of Jarausch's female subjects later admitted.

German women began to turn against the Third Reich only in 1943, when Allied bombing raids on German cities started disrupting their lives and the living conditions became steadily more unbearable. At the war's end, hundreds of thousands of German women, huddling in the ruins of bombed-out buildings, in cellars or in makeshift shelters, were brutally raped by Red Army soldiers. Many killed themselves out of shame; others had abortions to rid themselves of the unwanted consequences. Some survived by distancing themselves mentally and emotionally from the grim realities of the wartime years: "This is not you yourself," one woman recalled thinking, "this is only the body, the miserable body!" Others found solace in reconnecting with their families. For all of them, Nazism's collapse prompted self-critical reflections on the extent to which they had supported the dictatorship. The violence and chaos of the war's end, compounded by the arrival of some 11 million German refugees and expellees from the east, from countries like Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, prompted an anguished reappraisal of their earlier seduction by the promises of a glorious future held out to them by Hitler and his propaganda machine.

Viewed as unpolitical by the Nazi regime, German women largely ignored the persecution of their country's Jewish population before the war, argues Jarausch, as well as the mass murder of Europe's Jews during it, though they had mostly learned about it at the time, either by witnessing it in Germany itself or through reports from soldiers on leave from the Eastern Front. In an illuminating chapter on Nazism's victims, Jarausch notes that the vast majority of his Jewish autobiographers considered themselves Germans first and foremost and had little sympathy for Zionism. Members of the small Jewish minority in Germany—less than 1 percent of the

population in 1933—had to face persecution, marginalization, and the gradual elimination of economic and career opportunities as the Nazis tightened the screws, until about half of them—predominantly younger people—made the difficult decision to emigrate.

For many, measures such as the boycott of Jewish shops in 1933, the racial legislation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, or the pogroms and arrests of *Kristallnacht* in 1938 came as a terrible shock. Those who stayed in Germany eventually faced deportation and death; those who survived often did so by sheer chance. Having blond hair helped those few who went underground; lying about their age helped others who were lined up for "selection" on arrival at Auschwitz. Jarausch's subjects include an SS man who described the process of extermination by gas chamber at the camp in the same detail with which he recalled the seeming normality of the bourgeois lives that the SS led in their quarters in the nearby town.

Living in ruined and shattered cities and towns, deprived of food and shelter, cut off by the almost total destruction of road and rail communications, Germans in the war's aftermath formed a "community of defeat," created by a shared sense of shock and disorientation. Survival often depended on access to the black market or on stealing supplies of food and fuel. With millions of men killed in combat or still in prisoner-of-war camps, it fell to the women to carry out the task of clearing away the rubble and restoring a sense of normality and order. Out of such experiences, Jarausch's subjects shaped narratives of heroic suffering and survival, focusing on the way in which they rebuilt their own lives out of the ashes.

The search for moral reorientation led many back to religion. Politics seemed largely irrelevant to most—not surprisingly, since in the 1930s and early '40s it had betrayed them and led to disaster. Instead, people retreated

into the private sphere. No wonder, as many historians have pointed out, that family values seemed paramount in the 1950s.

The discrediting of the Nazi elites and the deaths of so many German men in the war also meant that there were many jobs available for younger people in West Germany, as well as opportunities for civic engagement, which in due course would lead to a new wave of political activism in the 1960s. In the Soviet zone of occupation, the early idealism was crushed by the relentless Stalinization of the social and political system, which led to the emigration of more than 3 million people to the freer and more prosperous West Germany, until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 cut off the last avenue of escape. After the collapse of communism in 1990, East Germans remembered their state largely as a failure. Only a few still insisted that some aspects of the German Democratic Republic, such as free health care, free nurseries, old-age care, and social welfare in general, "were models even for Germany as a whole." Yet even they did not want to see a return to GDR conditions.

On both sides of the Berlin Wall, West Germany—the Federal Republic—became an emblem of German success. "After [our] experiences in the Weimar Republic, the Nazi state, and the GDR," one person recalled, "[we] consider the Federal Republic of Germany the best German state yet." Twentieth-century Germans' negative experiences with war and authoritarian states, Jarausch concludes, turned them into convinced pacifists and democrats, whatever their attitudes toward immigrants and minorities might currently be. Only a very small minority, even in the far-right Alternative for Germany party, reject the dominant negative view of the country's Nazi past and the continuing acknowledgment of its crimes and atrocities.

Broken Lives offers a gripping and often moving account of people caught up in some of the 20th century's most terrible and cataclysmic events, the way they experienced them, and their attempts to make sense of them later in life. But readers need to be wary of Jarausch's frequent claims for his



subjects' typicality. Like far too many other historians, he sees the German middle class as emblematic of the country as a whole. By his own reckoning, three-quarters of the autobiographies he analyzes were written by members of the *bürgertum*. But most estimates put the manual working class in the mid-20th century at around 50 percent of the German population. Obviously, educated and professional people are more likely to write their memoirs than members of the urban or rural proletariat; only a tenth of Jarausch's subjects could be classified as working-class (the rest were from the lower-middle class). This leads Jarausch to make one dubious generalization after another when he uses these autobiographies to describe the experiences of all Germans.

Thus he claims, for example, that the parents and grandparents of his subjects generally felt a sense of nostalgia for the Bismarckian and Wilhelmian empire, sharing a common sense of nationalism and pride in Germany's achievements. What he fails to mention is that the largest political movement in Germany at the time, with over 1 million members by 1912 and more seats in the national legislature than any other, was the Social Democratic Party, which was fiercely critical of Imperial Germany's social and political structures and deeply hostile to the imperialist and patriotic ideals of the establishment and most of the middle class. The Social Democrats created a vast apparatus of cultural and social organizations, later copied by the Communists, in which millions of young people spent their lives until the Nazi seizure of power. Jarausch is aware of this, of course, but he pays far too little attention to the Social Democrats, leaving the impression that they were somehow marginal to the German experience. They were not.

Similarly, bourgeois memoirists might have lived through the 1920s in "the care-free atmosphere" of a "happy, sheltered childhood," but for most working-class children—or in other words, most children—it was a time of grinding poverty and hardship, especially during the Depression, and it was alleviated only briefly in the mid-1920s by the creation of a welfare system that eventually buckled and broke under the strain of mass unemployment.

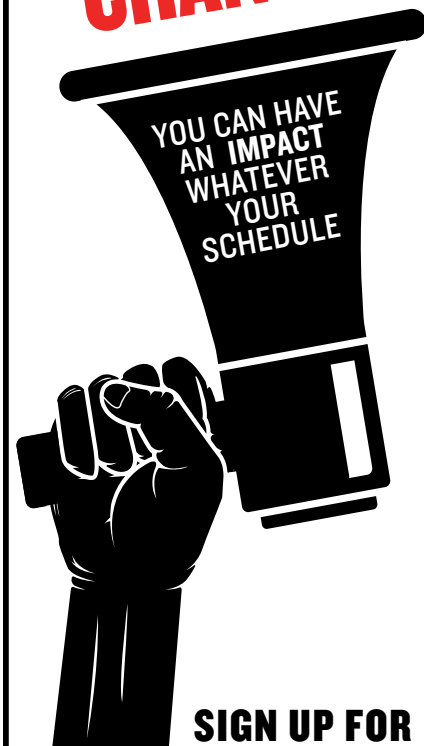


German schools in the 1920s may have been nationalist and conservative in some areas, but Social Democratic educational reforms were beginning to transform them into far more progressive and democratic institutions. Anti-Semitism was rife in the upper levels of society and in conservative politics, but it was weak to nonexistent in the working class. Jarausch does not address these important class differences. Many bourgeois youths were seduced by the promises of Nazism, but huge numbers of young proletarians with ties to the socialist or communist left were not. Just as interesting is the experience of those who allowed themselves to be co-opted into the

Nazi regime, usually against the wishes of their working-class parents, and the depoliticizing effects of both the regime, which destroyed the trade unions and the socialist movement, and the prosperity of the 1950s, which in the view of a number of German sociologists brought traditional working-class culture and values to an end and created a "levelled-down middle-class society" in Germany by the following decade. Exploring such processes might have complicated Jarausch's argument, but it would have lent it a good deal more social breadth and depth.

Jarausch could have easily redressed the social imbalance of his sample by adding the experience of working-class Germans, trade unionists, Social Democrats, and Communists—not only through working-class autobiographies, of which there are many, but also, and perhaps above all, by oral histories, such as Lutz Niethammer and Alexander von Plato's three volumes of interviews with workers in the Ruhr area from 1930 to 1960. There are many more such volumes in existence, edited by other labor historians, and it is hard to understand why Jarausch did not use them. Oral histories are no more unreliable than memoirs or autobiographies, and they have the advantage of extending further down the social scale than written testimonies generally do. Jarausch's book is therefore a valuable account of the everyday lives of many Germans before, during, and after the Third Reich, but it has to be treated with caution when it comes to generalizing the experience of the German people as a whole. ■

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THE BUSINESS OF SURVIVAL

Ling Ma's disaster fiction

by LARISSA PHAM

The millennial generation—whose oldest members are 37, and the youngest 22—has come of age at a strange time. Over the past two decades, huge advances in technology have made the world smaller and noisier; meanwhile, the reach of capitalism has ramped up to such an excruciating degree that almost everything has become a commodity, includ-

Severance

A Novel

By Ling Ma

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 304 pp. \$26.

ing our public personas. From the outset, millennials have also found themselves in a vortex of economic insecurity, with many of them entering the job market just as the Great Recession set in.

Today, more millennials live with their parents than previous generations did. We're marrying later, if we marry; we're

having children later, and fewer of them. It is nearly impossible to own a home without financial help—an inheritance, a down payment from the in-laws. We are killing industries left and right, but that's because we don't have the income to sustain them. Many of us have bachelor's degrees, but also the debt that came from acquiring them.

This swirl of pressures has birthed a distinct millennial sensibility; it has also helped define this generation's novels, which focus on the experience of economic and creative failure. What happens when you're ambivalent about the world of commerce around you? What happens when you stop doing what you're supposed to do? What happens when you do everything you're supposed to do... and things still don't work out?

In Weike Wang's recent debut novel, *Chemistry*, the narrator abruptly quits her PhD program. "Finally the lab coat comes off," she tells us. "I place it neatly into the drawer. Then I smash five beakers on the ground. I shout, Beakers are cheap, while the whole lab gathers to watch." In Anelise Chen's *So Many Olympic Exertions*, another novel of academic despair, we find the protagonist, Athena, struggling to complete her dissertation. Instead of working on it, she takes up swimming; after losing her funding, she moves back in with her parents. Even *Goodbye, Vitamin*, last year's sleeper hit from Rachel Khong, features a protagonist who, at the end of a failed engagement, moves home to be with her family—home being not merely a place of comfort but, for many millennials, the only place to turn.

Failure, of course, is as common in literature as it is in life. But the challenges that these characters face (and fail to overcome) belong uniquely to their generation, striving as they are under a very different set of social and economic conditions than the ones that helped buoy their parents. And even when they do succeed, they look at those achievements askance, failing to appreciate the lives they've fallen into. The luckiest of them live in Brooklyn-like neighborhoods and attend to their passions. Yet economic anxiety sets the scene for their lives, whether in the foreground or as a sinister background hum. Adrift in their careers, their relationships, or both, these millennial protagonists sleepwalk through life, shaken awake only by cataclysmic events outside of their control: a financial crisis, the illness of a parent, or, in the case of Ling Ma's debut novel, *Severance*, a global outbreak of disease.

Larissa Pham is an artist and writer in Brooklyn. Her essays have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Guernica*, and *Complex*.

In *Severance*, we meet Candace Chen, a former visual-arts student who has gotten by at her publishing job for five years, mostly by keeping her head down. She works in Bible production, the stodgiest department of the publishing house, though she's occasionally tempted by the allure of the art girls—art being the more stylish, creative department. Candace doesn't have much in the way of ambition, but that doesn't seem to bother her; for the most part, she lives an ordinary life. Having recently lost her parents, she watches movies with her writer boyfriend, Jonathan, in his apartment in Greenpoint, Brooklyn; for a while, she keeps a photography blog titled *NY Ghost*.

Then the pandemic starts. A spore-borne disease dubbed Shen Fever, originating in Asia, spreads to the United States, causing those who become infected to quickly deteriorate, falling into strange behavioral patterns. A fevered shop girl folds shirts in the window of a Juicy Couture store, though half of her jaw is missing; an infected family repeats their dinner service over and over, mumbling grace even when there's no food on the table.

At first, Candace decides to remain at her job while New York slowly dies around her. (Her boss convinces her to stay so that when she does lose her job, she can get... severance.) But eventually the pandemic forces her to flee. Joining a pack of survivors led by a charismatic IT guy named Bob—"He was Goth when he felt like it," Ma writes, with the kind of sharp, offhand characterization that makes *Severance* a pleasure to read—Candace realizes that her survival may be more difficult with others than apart from them.

In alternating chapters, *Severance* switches between the apocalyptic present and the deep past, illuminating Candace's character and family history as the novel speeds ahead and the chances for her survival appear more and more remote. "Memories beget memories," Candace says as she treks through the Midwest. "Shen Fever being a disease of remembering, the fevered are trapped indefinitely in their memories. But what is the difference between the fevered and us? Because I remember too, I remember perfectly. My memories replay, unprompted, on repeat."

Over the course of these reflections, we learn about her immigrant parents and the beginning and the end of her relationship with Jonathan. Ma writes most of these scenes with an oddball tenderness. "My heart barked confusedly with love," Candace thinks, seeing Jonathan after a long absence; later, in bed, he touches her body deliberately and carefully, "as if separating egg whites from yolk."

It's this movement between past and present that makes the novel work: As Candace's future becomes increasingly uncertain, and her path more dangerous, we come to realize what she's already lost—long before the pandemic hit. This feat of pacing and plot is also what makes *Severance* stand out among recent works of millennial fiction: The whole novel is, in a way, about how we are but an accretion of everything that's ever happened to us—our habits, our choices, the choices of our lovers and parents, all come back refigured as memory, knit irreversibly into our character. The disease itself forces people to return to the past, even those who are not afflicted by it—like Candace, who, as she faces her own mortality, recalls how she came to be the person that she is today.

Early in the novel, on a typical supply-gathering "stalk," Candace, as the newbie of the group, has a gun placed in her hands. She had attempted to hide a fevered young girl who'd escaped the group's initial scan of the premises. As her punishment—"Let this be a lesson to you to be more observant next time"—she's instructed to shoot the girl, to "release" her. Candace does, and Ma describes the scene in all of its violence. "She raised her blue eyes and looked at me, as the sixth shot hit her in the cheek, and the seventh reached the forehead.... I just kept shooting, my hands welded to the humming carbine."

The scene is our first glimpse that the gang of survivors that Candace has stumbled upon are not necessarily her path to salvation. Bob, as charismatic as he is, is more cult leader than hero, but leaving the group could be just as dangerous. It also gives us some insight into Candace's own psyche: When everything is stripped away, what kind of value does she see in human life? As the story develops, we are also left with another question: What kind of value does she see in her own?

Tense and elegant, Ma's writing here masterfully treads the line between genre fiction and literature. Part bildungsroman, part horror flick, *Severance* thrillingly morphs into a novel about self-worth, about the kinds of value we place on our own lives. Describing a fight with Jonathan in the days before Shen Fever, Candace thinks:

What I didn't say was: I know you too well. You live your life idealistically. You think it's possible to opt out of the system. No regular income, no health insurance. You quit jobs on a

dime. You think this is freedom but I still see the bare, painstakingly cheap way you live, the scrimping and saving, and that is not freedom either.... In this world, money is freedom. Opting out is not a real choice.

These might all be good points, but when money too is no longer freedom—it isn't all that useful during an apocalypse—Candace doesn't exactly have a choice, either. Or at least she isn't willing to make one.

Despite its gory, zombie-thriller elements, *Severance* is really about our moment. In the world of Ma's novel, all the benchmarks of a happy and fulfilling life have been so obliterated by apocalypse that to ponder the quality of Candace's future seems nearly impossible. This isn't too far from how many young people today feel about their own lives, pandemic or no. A crash is on its way—an economic crash, a political crash, an environmental crash. The current state of affairs has long been untenable. Some of us may get to the other side, but the business of survival—of making it, and making ourselves happy—seems grim. One day, *Severance* posits, everything we know will be gone. What then? ■

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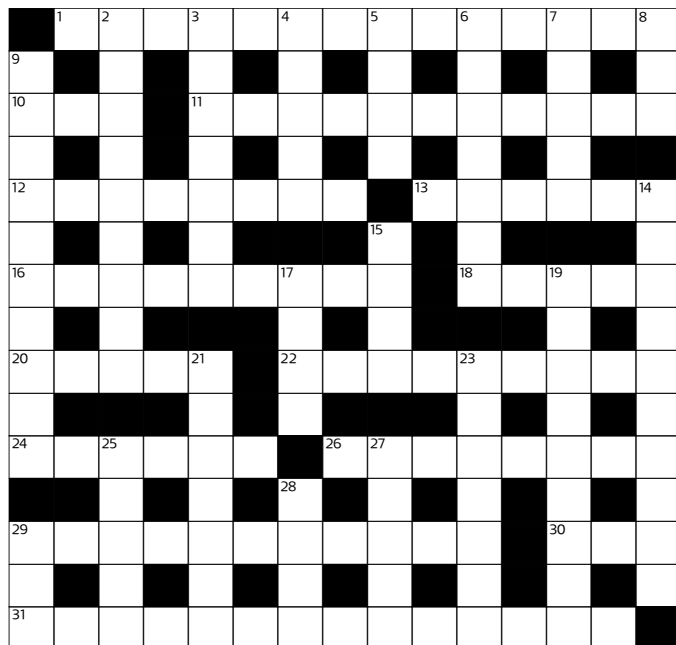


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Puzzle No. 3478

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 Composer taking and retaking ingredients of Advil? Not! (7,7)
- 10 What remains after a fire: a tree (3)
- 11 Herb's terrible regret: getting involved in white nationalism at first (11)
- 12 Bookish queen loses head after a certain amount of drink (8)
- 13 Puzzle dances? That's so cute! (6)
- 16 Considers violating vows in good humor (5,4)
- 18 Gets booty back in seat (5)
- 20 Where you might find actors in the beginning (5)
- 22 They make up your side with repeated helpings of meats (9)
- 24 Stern veers east unexpectedly (6)
- 26 Represent California university's shifting defense (5,3)
- 29 '70s singer is a total mess, initially interrupting party (5,6)
- 30 Admit cutting the front off dress (3)

- 31 Safe and honest combination holding what belongs to us for a whole year—they can be found in the completed diagram (3,4,7)

DOWN

- 2 Rethink thorniest achievements in baseball (2-7)
- 3 Undisciplined son keeps dependent ahead (7)
- 4 Spiritual banquet starting late (5)
- 5 Wives' largely liberal opinion (4)
- 6 Competes to eat egg, potatoes, carrots, and so on (7)
- 7 Moving top to bottom of smooth 6 (5)
- 8 In Glasgow, John Irving adapted novelist's introductions (3)
- 9 Corrected, I call a UFO sighting originally wrong (10)
- 14 Ida, a renowned journalist and snob, retaining name as a source (10)
- 15 Song of unprotected outcast (4)
- 17 Swap backs of enormous containers (4)
- 19 Start to obtain tattered futon covering to haul away (3,2,4)
- 21 Storm furiously at donor (7)
- 23 Mother incoherently rants watchwords (7)
- 25 No backing for Williams at empty stadium (5)
- 27 British politician wearing shirt in Arizona city (5)
- 28 Pronounced drain for plaintiff (4)
- 29 Note time period (3)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3477

ACROSS 1 CH(URCHGO)ER (*Grouch* anag.) 6 phonetic hidden 9 G(R)AIN
 10 MIMI + C. KING 12 SKIP ANTS
 13 PR(EPA)Y 15 SOMNO (anag.) + LENT
 16 hidden 17 "cube it"
 19 REP + ELLEN + T 21 AF(LO + A)T
 22 M IS M + ATCH (anag.)
 25 INPA (anag.) + TIE + NT
 26 A(DIE)U 27 TUN A (rev.) 28 anag.

DOWN 1 C + AGES 2 U + RANI + UM
 3 letter bank 4 GAMET(H)E + OR + Y
 5 ELM + O 7 WHIS[t] + PER
 8 ME + GAY + ACHT
 11 CAROL + ELOM (rev.) + BARD
 14 letter bank 15 SO + CIALIS + T
 18 "pull Ben" spoonerism
 20 ENT (anag.) + WINE 23 H + AUNT 24 rev.

C	H	U	R	C	H	G	O	E	R	S	W	I	M
A	R	I	A	L	I	C	H	E					
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